Seikai no Senki Volume4

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From birth to death, we all take the same path.

——imagine a fortunate life. It is usually assumed, living through a life on a planet is essential for a good person.

On the day of your parent's funeral, the head of personnel will come.

——imagine misfortune: when it rains it pours. Being the head of personnel, to visit someone where they live, usually notifying that person has been chosen to relocate.

The blue haired ones

——a degrading term of sorts referring to people who prefer living on spaceships. Most people when expressing dislike toward agents of the empire that live in space use this term. Also, it can be used to describe the condition of a mind gradually going insane; because the hair of the space race The Humankind Empire of Abh is blue.

—excerpt from a proverb from the federation of Hania

Prologue

How many funerals have I attended so far? How many more funerals must I attend in the future? The 27th Empress of the Bar Frybarec, Ablïarsec Néïc Dubleuscr Lamï, Ramaj, thought. She was aboard the flagship that also served as the emperor's imperial vessel, the Star Force's interstellar ship the "Gaftnosh", slowly making its way towards Lakfakalle's funeral hall.

Perhaps, the countless nations of ancient times had all had their own ways of doing things. However, for The Humankind Empire of Abh, the imperial vessel is always designed so that the emperor can command a battle at the frontlines. Because of this, the emperor's imperial vessel is always a state-of-the-art patrol ship. The ship Ramaj was aboard was no exception--a Kau class patrol ship, modified to meet the design specifications of a flagship. It had one further distinction as well: of all the ships in the universe, only the Gaftnosh housed a commander's chair made of emerald jade.

Other fleets notwithstanding, within the Star Force, most frontline soldiers wished their quarters were as spacious and luxurious as the commander's. Although the emperor's quarters on the ship are not very fancy,

they were still decorated exquisitely. Despite this, for one who has to shoulder the burden of an empire with more than a trillion citizens, such living quarters must seem simple and unadorned.

However, to Ramaj, this room is like paradise. After all , the title of empress entails a great deal of work and responsibility, especially during times of war. Therefore, any place that allows one to enjoy some peace and quiet is very precious. It would be even better if this precious time were not disturbed by urgent reports--but that would be too much of a luxury to hope for.

At that moment, the floors shook, signaling that the ship had docked.

Ramaj set down the jade color wine glass, and got up from her seat. When the doors opened, she was greeted by the sight of her attendants, standing on mobile platforms, where they had apparently been waiting for some time.

“Your Majesty,” the attendants respectfully lowered their heads to the empress.

Ramaj nodded in acknowledgment as she stepped onto a mobile platform. Thus, the empress left her paradise.

The mobile platform moved smoothly alongside a painting of a grass field. Some 10 meters before her, soldiers raised their weapons, saluting the empress. Even as she floated past them, Ramaj couldn't stop from wondering - *perhaps somewhere in Plane Space another funeral was taking place, a funeral that couldn't be held in a funeral hall.*

No matter how many people say that it's an old-fashioned way of thinking, to a soldier in the Star Force, the best choice for a coffin is their ship. Perhaps some feel that it isn't dignified to place so many people in one coffin, but their numbers are few at best. The majority of the people in the Star Force believe that the chance to die together with family should be cause for celebration.

“Everyone on the ship is family,” she says, knowing no one will object to these words. Although no grand ceremonies were held for shipmates to become sworn brothers and sisters, when the situation aboard a ship is

that either everyone lives or everyone dies, naturally it begins to feel as if the crew is a family--especially during times of war. Like now, the so called "Era of Warfare."

Currently in planar space, both sides have amassed countless numbers of ships ready for a head on assault: either kill or be killed. Countless funerals of grand scale, continuously, never stopping.

But let us return from talk of funerals in planar space, to the place here and now--“the capital of the Kin of the Stars.” Lakfakalle’s funeral hall is but one of countless funeral halls in the empire; however, it is one of the largest. The only people who are allowed to be buried here are the Royal Family, and those that obtained special permission from the emperor.

Although the Abh are not a religious people, they do occasionally display religious-like behaviors, funeral rites among them. Even the funerals of the most religiously devout landers would seem simple and cheap, compared to those of the Abh.

Then again, if we are to take an accurate view of the matter, an Abh funeral in essence doesn't really have any religious significance at all. After all, when the Abh pay

their respects to the dead, beings like gods play no role; these funerals are merely a ceremony for the friends of the deceased to gather and say their goodbyes.

The mobile platform finally cleared Gaftnosh's air lock and entered the funeral hall.

Paintings of stars line either side of the main hallway. The Abh normally prefer to have artwork depicting terrestrial scenes, but where the deceased are concerned, they consider stars a more fitting symbol.

The open door reveals many people on either side. When they realize Ramaj is entering, they promptly extend their greatest salute to the emperor.

An officer with light brown hair stepped out from the crowd. Ramaj recognized him from military ranking Insignia. His name is Shidoryua Boruju Sid Seeru and he is here to mourn the loss of a family member.

"It must have been bothersome for Your Majesty to come personally; we are all honored by your presence here, Your Majesty," Shidoryua greeted Ramaj.

“I feel that this has been a great loss,” Ramaj says with sorrow. “This is the funeral of my chief advisor; there is nothing that could keep me from coming here."

“If my late father were to hear Your Majesty’s words, he would be extremely happy.”

“Perhaps,” Ramaj said with a smile as she stepped off the mobile platform.

Shidoryua’s father’s name is Shidoryua Boruju Cid Seez, who up to this day had been prime minister of the empire.

Before his death, he hadn't taken the concept of "rest" very seriously. Furthermore, his nature did not allow him to spend any time with others on trivial matters; even if that other person was the empress.

If we allowed him to know, in theory, that the cold and cruel empress of the Abh was present, looking back on the deceased, he would no doubt call it a stupid waste of time. Ramaj was sure of this.

The empress knows very well that Shidoryua sometimes finds it difficult to resist the temptation from the flowerbed.

The funeral hall is of a circular design with the coffin of the former Prime Minister in the center.

Ramaj's feet lightly tapped the floor; this place does not have an artificial gravity device. With the unique grace of the Abh, she pressed against the floor with one foot, then the other, until she reached the coffin of the Prime Minister.

Ramaj silently bid her farewell to Shidoryua and allowed the next person in line to see the coffin. On an occasion like this, not even the empress receives any special treatment. After all, at a funeral the center of attention should be the deceased.

Ramaj went back to her seat and lightly placed her fingertips on a handrail on the wall to keep herself from floating away.

At that moment, a lander riding a flying machine made straight for Ramaj, rudely.

In actuality, there were quite a lot of landers in attendance: the late prime minister was a lander by birth, and many of his colleagues and subordinates were not genetically manipulated. But this particular discourteous lander is not even an Imperial subject. He is Ambassador Tin Kuihan from the Hania Federation.

“Your Majesty,” he said with the formalities of a lander. His movements are well executed. He seems to merely want to get close to Ramaj.

However, the empress' bodyguards swiftly came to her sides, preventing him from getting any closer. Their hands were on their guns, ready to draw at a moment’s notice.

“Mr. Ambassador, to have you personally attend the funeral of my prime minister, I am very grateful,” Ramaj said with insincere politeness.

“You flatter me; his Excellency Shidoryua is a good friend of mine,” the Ambassador replied with a tone of great sorrow. If he was acting, then he must have been a very good actor. “To come and pay my condolences should not be a painstaking thing that requires the gratitude of others.”

“Really? Then I won't say I am 'grateful' for your presence; rather, I am 'regretful' of it.”

“I am indeed very sorry.” Tin Kuihan bowed deeply towards the empress, so much so that he almost lost balance. “If I may be so bold, could Your Majesty spare some time after this event so that we may talk?”

It looks like this is the ambassador’s real motive for coming here. If he just wanted to share stories about his deceased friend, then there should be plenty of people besides the empress that he could talk to.

“Do you have any idea what sort of occasion this is?” Ramaj said icily. “If what you said was just to be courteous, then that is still within the bounds of my tolerance.”

“Your Majesty must forgive me; I know this request is very unreasonable. I only make it in the interest of peace. ” Having been given an inch, Tin Kuihan made his play to take a mile.

“If that is the case, you can discuss this with the new Prime Minister.” Even though the late Prime Minister’s death was sudden, Ramaj had already appointed a new Prime Minister without hesitation, promoting Burashu,

previously a director and ambassador of the foreign office, to the post.

Compared to the previous Prime Minister, he wasn't very experienced. However, the empress has faith that Burashu has the ability to shoulder this great responsibility. Besides, the Foreign Office handles all diplomatic matters. The only countries that still have open diplomatic relations with the Abh are the " Federation of Hania". A high ranking foreign official should know such information.

"It is unfortunate, but his Excellency the Prime Minister seems unwilling to listen to what I have to say."

"Really? The Prime Minister mentioned during his inauguration that he spent quite some time with you."

"Mere time does not equate to any results. Thus..."

"Even for the Empress," Ramaj's tone has already turned scolding, "it is a very serious taboo to take matters into one's own hands and infringe on the responsibilities of a subordinate. I will be very pleased if you can understand this concept, Ambassador."

"It is because I understand this that I come to you today with what I have to say."

Should we just kick him out of here? The imperial bodyguards looked toward the Empress for instructions.

That is not yet necessary —— Ramaj waved her fingertips in response. The movement was very subtle, so much so that Tin Kuihan should not have even noticed.

"If you just want to talk, then I'll make an exception."

"I am honored to have this opportunity."

"However, you should not mistake this opportunity for a newly acquired privilege."

"I understand." Tin Kuihan glanced at the Imperial bodyguards and said, "Since that is settled, I'll leave this place and give room to those who better suit this occasion."

Ramaj used all her effort to restrain herself from saying, "Then do so," on impulse, and instead curtly said

, “Then we’ll meet later, after the funeral is over. We can talk while riding on my mobile platform as it takes us to your ship.”

There was a short period of silence between the two. It appears that the Ambassador is not satisfied with the short amount of time that he is given.

Actually, the embassy is within the Imperial Palace. Ramaj could have simply invited the Ambassador to board the Gaftnosh to travel with her. This way he could definitely schedule enough time to talk to his heart’s content.

Nevertheless, the Empress certainly wouldn’t offer this courteous exception to the ambassador easily. It is as Ramaj had suspected, Tin Kuihan truly is not satisfied with this. However, the Ambassador cannot allow the empress to see his dissatisfaction. Instead, he bowed deeply and said, “I am honored and grateful to have this opportunity, Your Majesty.”

While the two were talking, everyone who attended the funeral continued to bid their farewells to the deceased. When there was a lull in the number of people going up to see the coffin, the funeral hall was filled with

a rumbling sound. It is a sound that carries no meaning. When it began, it is only a low moan; Ramaj adds her voice of parting regret to the sea of voices.

Those who has seen the body does not appear again. The moan grows louder, filling the entire hall. Although at the beginning the chord was a bit uneven, now everyone's singing voice comes together to form a beautiful chord. They are singing the dirge of the Abh, a moving song that represents the end of an Abh's journey through life.

Those that were born on a planet, when their time is up, often wish to be buried on their home planet. However, Shidoryua Boruju Cid Seez chose to have an Abh funeral as the star of his last ceremony. The empire also honored his choice with the utmost respect. Simply using this funeral hall for the ceremony made it a state funeral with the highest honors. Even within the Royal Family, only a few members ever receive such intimate treatment.

As the dirge of the Abh fills the entire hall, a black shining cylinder lowers itself from the sky. Slowly, it covers the transparent coffin. It is a shell that will protect the corpse for a hundred million years.

When the coffin has completely disappeared within the cylinder, it begins to lift from the floor, preparing to be loaded into the electromagnetic cannon. The volume of the dirge rises with the coffin.

The coffin is loaded and the breech closed. In a blink of a moment, the cannon fires the coffin towards the center of the galaxy.

The acceleration of the cannon is countered by the large mass of the funeral hall, producing a temporary comfortable gravity.

Under the weight of the gravity, the sound of everyone's heels touching the floor simultaneously fills the funeral hall. With that, the funeral comes to an end. Ramaj looked again at the closed breech of the electromagnetic canon.

How many more times will I have to view this event in the future?

She lightly kicks off from the floor as she bounds to the Hania Federation ambassador waiting at the exit.

Chapter 1: The Battle of Kemal Sord

"ETA to space-time fusion: 5 minutes."

The second captain of the assault frigate "Flicaubh", Deputy Hecto-commander Ablïarsec Néïc Dubleuscr Bœrh Parhynr Lamhirh nodded to the report from her subordinate.

Considering that the coming space-time fusion was swarming with enemy mines, the response of Ekuryua--who served as both Navigator and Executive Officer--was suprisingly calm.

"Incoming inter-bubble message from the flagship," Communications Officer Rear Flyer Yateshu continued to report, "All ships are to commence operations using individual space-time bubbles, 1-1-0-7."

"Send a signal of acknowledgement." Lafiel nodded as she looked at the clyuno on her hand.

"1-1-0-7" actually means the time at which to commence the battle. In other words, 11:07.

The Flicaubh of the Scourge Squadron was in pursuit of what appeared to be four space-time bubbles. Pushing

against the flow of the dense space-time particles flowing from the center of the galaxy, the Scourge Squadron readied to commence their ambush.

"Deca-commander," Lafiel ordered, "space-time separation at 1-1-0-7."

"Without a plan." Ekuryua murmured as she prepared the ship for space-time separation.

Lafiel felt likewise.

Although it increased the mobility of each individual ship, once separated into their own space-time bubbles, the assault ships were sacrificing their overall defensive strength. They were flying directly into a barrage of mines with a very frail formation.

"Should we evade?" asked Ekuryua.

To a certain extent, a pilot's skill could take advantage of the assault frigate's mobility and compensate for the lack of defenses.

"No," Lafiel quickly decided. "Even if we can evade some of the mines, the squadrons behind us would not be so lucky."

The Scourge Squadron was currently the vanguard of four divisions which made up the main force of the advancing Assault Squadron "Bosuru", each squadron following the one ahead of it.

In spite of this, assault ships were particularly weak when defending against mines.

In the past, guard ship squadrons specializing in anti-mine operations would protect the fleet. They were kept near the front lines allowing quick formation changes as the flow of battle shifted. This time, however, they were nowhere to be seen. The fierce front line combat had incurred heavy losses to these squadrons and Headquarters changed policies in an attempt to be more conservative in their usage.

However, by doing so, the assault frigates from the Scourge Squadron and the cruisers from the Scout Fleet essentially became a shield for the larger assault ships behind them.

"Ten seconds until space-time separation," reported Ekuryua. "Eight, seven, six, five ..."

Lafiel stood up from the commander's chair and drew her sword to direct the battle.

The assault frigate was not designed with the control interface that allows the captain to feel what the ship feels. Because of this, Lafiel feels that her inability to control the ship leaves her with a semblance of imbalance .

However, she had better get used to this sensation, because from this day forward, unless she is demoted, she will probably never have the chance to use the hand interface to pilot a ship again.

"Space-time separation." Ekuryua said in a dull tone.

The four assault frigates separated, each at the center of their own universe.

"Ninety-two seconds until space-time fusion with enemy mines," reported Ekuryua until the next phase of the operation.

"Deploy the magnetic defense shields," Lafiel ordered.

"Deploying the magnetic defense shields, no abnormalities detected," Deca-commander and Chief Engineer Gurinshia reported.

"Sixty seconds until space-time fusion."

"Set ion cannons to auto targeting and set distance to one-hundred," Lafiel gave out the next set of orders.

There are countless ion cannons built on the side of the assault frigate. Although older model cruisers came equipped with the anti-proton cannons, they only get about half the power. Thus, Star Force designed the assault frigate with ion cannons instead of mobile laser cannons.

"Ion cannon banks set to auto targeting, distance to fire : one-hundred." The chief engineer is actually responsible for the ion cannons, because the assault frigate employs an automatic firing system. This system limits the amount of human interaction, but the functionality of this system is of utmost importance to the assault frigate. Shouldering such a heavy responsibility, Gurinshia waited a bit before reporting, "Setting complete, the safety on the cannon has been released, banks one through eight show no abnormalities."

"Thirty seconds until space-time fusion."

Ekuryua's voice might have expressed a sliver of nervousness, but maybe I am just being oversensitive.

Lafiel suddenly felt an intense gaze on her. This time it wasn't her being oversensitive, because the gaze came from the blue haired Junior Officer Line Wing Flyer Gunomuboshu.

Lafiel knows what is on his mind, since she was once a Line Wing Flyer, too.

Gunomuboshu looks like he is very hopeful to be assigned any task at all. His job on this ship is to transmit orders, but on an assault frigate, the 'order transmitter' is also the assistant gunner, the assistant communications officer and the assistant navigations officer. In other words, the 'order transmitter' basically does nothing but miscellaneous chores.

Usually order transmitter's primary responsibility is the operation of the ship, however, habit-wise most of the secondary tasks are handled by other bridge officers. When there is work for the junior officers, usually it is when the ship is docked somewhere far away from any

combat. Therefore, the bridge officers would often utilize whatever free time the junior officer gets. Besides, other than the gunnery officer, no other officer on the bridge could utilize the hand interface to manage their stations which makes most feel a bit down. Even if there is a new flyer onboard, there is still little opportunity to operate the ship, usually just assigning them some miscellaneous tasks to do.

Lafiel thought about her little brother, who was now probably fighting somewhere in planar space, too.

"Gunomuboshu," Lafiel has decided his task for this upcoming battle. "I will allow you the controls to the ion cannon banks on your console. Before the end of combat, your job will be to get really comfortable with those mobile cannons."

Although the task of controlling the mobile cannon banks can be accomplished even by a half-hearted child, to him, this should be a very good experience. A soldier with nothing to do during combat would certainly feel very uneasy, and that fear would make him needlessly panic.

"Thank you very..." Gunomuboshu was just about to say, but he quickly felt to express gratitude in this situation would go against common sense. So the only words that got to Lafiel's ears were, "Yes, Ma'am".

Lafiel, on her console, gave the controls of the cannons to Gunomuboshu. After she finished this easy task, she then used the sensors to scan the interior of the space-time bubble.

The interior of the space-time bubble already started to deform, a sign that space-time fusion is about to occur.

She glanced at the bubbles on the planar space map. The enemy mines constrain the assault frigates squadron from advancing.

"This is good...no need to painstakingly go after the mines, since the enemy just throws them at us," thought Lafiel.

"Three enemy mines in space-time fusion," Ekuryua reported, "...fusion complete."

Three enemy mines came at the Flicaubh simultaneously. However, Lafiel did not respond to them , as it was unnecessary.

"Cannon banks two and three have begun to fire, everything functioning normally." Gunomuboshu reported in an excited voice.

"You sure said that pretty smoothly." His immediate superior Gunnery Officer Vanguard Flyer Arubofu said in a teasing voice, "Marvelous, simply amazing."

Looks like Gunomuboshu already didn't have time to reply, since he was still tightly affixed to his console.

So far, the mobile cannons on the ship had taken care of the mines. They lock on to individual mines and constantly sweep the surrounding space with weapons fire.

Lafiel didn't really believe that the weak firepower of the ion cannons could take care of the mines. However, even if they used the assault frigate's main weapon, the electromagnetic rail cannons, it wouldn't really raise their chances of survival by much. Therefore, it was best for her to endure this outlook.

These three mines consistently changed their movement and trajectory. Although the mines are unmanned weapons, they are still a fully equipped ship that can travel through planar space. One mine boldly charged towards the Assault Frigate, and an ion cannon beam was able to reach the mine, but one beam is hardly enough to destroy it.

The mine was damaged and lost its engine power, so it started to dive straight into the ship, where it was met by ten beams all focused on it.

The mine broke into pieces while spewing out antimatter fuel. When antimatter meets space, it starts to react. Following the trajectory of the mine, antimatter fuel struck the Flicaubh.

However, this small quantity of antimatter hardly poses any danger to an assault frigate, because most of the antimatter will be converted to energy before it ever hits the ship. The antimatter that is left would be deflected by the Magnetic Defense Shields.

Another mine was destroyed by the cannons; its antimatter explodes harmlessly moments later. However, the last mine is proving to be difficult to deal with.

"Adjust course!" Lafiel orders. "Up 4-0, left 2-5, after course adjustment, fire port thrusters full blast."

The assault frigate immediately turned, while trying to maintain a good distance away from the mine. Of course, the speed of the mine is much faster than the assault frigate's, so the only reason for doing this is to give more time for the cannons to hit their target. Of course to Lafiel , the time that she just gained is ever so precious.

The cannons on the left side of the ship immediately adjust themselves for the best firing angle, concentrating all beams on the mine.

And their target finally exploded into pieces.

"Four more mines, incoming," Ekuryua said.

Lafiel didn't even have time to take a breath, but she still believed that she could manage it.

If the mine attacks are still at this low level, then there should be no reason to defend by fusing with other ships.

Although the mines repeatedly accelerate and decelerate, avoiding a lock-on from the assault frigate,

the mobile cannon's ion beams still dealt fatal blows to the mines.

While occasionally giving out orders to adjust course, Lafiel also continued to keep a close eye on the planar space map.

Currently, there were ten enemy cruisers in a horizontal formation, each in their own space-time bubble; all waiting to welcome the 1st Scourge Squadron.

It is very likely that this ship will engage in one-on-one combat against those cruisers later.

However, the enemy forces are also currently under a fierce barrage of mines. Situated at the rear are battle ships who have no shortage of mines to send out. The mines pass by the 1st Scourge Squadron directly fusing with the enemy's space-time bubble.

Neither side used any mines for defensive purposes. Basically, the target of every mine that both sides send out is not other mines, no matter how much damage both sides will sustain by using this tactic.

Knowing this, Lafiel starts to frown, shifting her attention from the planar space map to the space outside of the ship.

The three mines are using complex trajectories to try to flank the left side of the ship. Relying only on the cannon banks on the left side of the ship may not be enough to deal with these mines.

Lafiel gives the order to change course in an attempt to once again gain more time. At the same time, she inputs the combat priority for each target, hoping to shoot them down one by one.

At the same time, one mine heads straight for the ship after getting close undetected. The ion cannons immediately adjust, focusing many beams and finally destroying the mine. The ship shook as the mine exploded close to the ship.

"Damage report?" Lafiel asked.

"Very light, as far as the interior of the ship is concerned," Vangard Flyer Linn Ssynec Rocr Ïarlucec Dreuc Haïder Ghintec (Jinto) reported.

"Ion cannon number 304 has been damaged," Gunomuboshu also reported. "I am very sorry, captain."

"This isn't your fault, right?" Lafiel felt a bit uneasy.

She doesn't know why, but new soldiers are unusually fearful of her. What's worse is that she has already gotten used to this behavior.

"Is it repairable?" Lafiel asks Gunomuboshu.

"Yes, I'll initiate repairs now." The junior officer says as he began to shut down the damaged ion cannon.

"Chief engineer, begin repair operations." Lafiel ordered.

"Understood." The chief engineer quickly relayed orders to the repair team on the right side of the ship. " Engineering team heading for the third ion cannon banks deck!"

"The other three mines, incoming." Ekuryua said, "... they're here."

Luckily, this wave of mines coming after the Flicaubh, fused in separate locations.

"Pankov's space-time bubble, destroyed!" Yateshu reports the loss of a friendly vessel.

Lafiel nodded her head lightly. Actually she did not even need the report, because just now she felt a huge surge of space-time particles flow from the Pankov's collapsed space-time bubble.

She had, once before, experienced such a nervous feeling. A similar thing happened when she was still the captain of the assault ship. Although now she has mobile cannons as protections, however this fact alone cannot rid the roots of her nervousness. Maybe in the next second, both she and her subordinates will all forfeit their lives. To prevent this regretful thing from happening, you do everything to the best of your ability.

"The engineers dispatched to the mobile cannon are reporting in." the chief engineer said, "They would at least need three hours to fix it."

"Chief engineer, what is your take on this?" Lafiel asks.

"I don't have any doubts about the estimate that my subordinates gave."

Lafiel also felt that same, at the least she trusts Gurinshia's very much.

"Then, order your subordinates to continue to stay on standby."

"Yes, ma'am"

Her logic was that it is better to let the soldiers rest than to work on repairs that would not be completed in time for the battle. After all, the engineers will still have to carry out a lot of troublesome tasks later on.

A sound suddenly came from her clyuno rings. She checks it to see who wants to secretly communicate with her.

Of course this isn't an appropriate setting for a chat. Even if you are not familiar with Lafiel, with regards to how the Ablïarsec clan members all have a dark fearsome nature. Also those who are familiar with Lafiel, know better than to distract her during combat, even if it is Jinto.

"Captain," it turns out to be the chief engineer, "May I suggest something?"

"Make it short."

"I will; I think that we should let the engineers start on their repair work."

"Why?"

"Because this way it allows them to calm their minds."

"Really?" Lafiel nodded. Since the chief engineer said so, then it should not be incorrect. After all, the chief engineer is promoted from below, so of course he would understand their frame of mind. Even if everyone on a ship is fighting a battle, there is a big psychological difference between the officers and the crewmen.

At this time, the mines started to behave dangerously. Lafiel terminates the conversation on her clyuno rings, and gave out orders for the ship to change heading.

Then she gave the chief engineer an order, "Rescind my previous order, let the engineers start the repairs on the mobile cannon, with low priority."

"Yes, Ma'am!" Chief engineer Gurinshia said in a voice that reflected the thoughts in his heart.

The mines are finally destroyed, but the real danger has yet to start. The Flicaubh will soon officially meet with the enemy cruisers.

"Inter-bubble message from the squadron flagship" Yateshu reports, "The Flicaubh is to fuse with enemy space-time bubble 1-0-2."

"Send a signal of acknowledgement."

Looks like the commander chose the one-on-one duel tactic. The next step is to see if the enemy accepts the challenge.

The enemy took the bait.

The enemy space-time bubbles are not fusing with each other. As if each becoming an army of one heading for a confrontation against the assault frigates.

Lafiel looks over at her left hand, *it would be so much better if this hand could be used in a control interface.*

"Accelerate to combat speed!" Lafiel orders, "Prepare to fire the electromagnetic rail cannons."

"Accelerating to combat speed." Gurinshia responds to Lafiel's orders, and then continues to report in a depressed voice, "Main engine output maximum; no abnormalities."

"All electromagnetic rail cannons functioning normally ." The Gunnery officer continues to report, "Safety device disabled, and nuclear fusion warheads have been loaded, ready to fire at any time."

"This is the captain," Lafiel starts to talk on the ship-wide intercom. "Starting now, this ship will go into ship-to-ship combat. During this time, the ship may accelerate far above protocol, surpassing the limit to which the artificial gravity device can compensate. Therefore, everyone be prepared to brace yourselves."

"Point the ship's bow at the point of fusion." Lafiel then orders Arubofu, "You may fire at will, and I'll leave the piloting in your hands."

According to her estimation, when going into one-on-one combat, it is best to completely leave the movements of a ship in the hands of the pilot; also she herself should not object or intervene.

"I've waited a long time for those words." Arubofu couldn't refrain his enthusiasm. But he quickly regained composure and corrected himself, saying, "No, I understand."

Lafiel slowly starts to have a feeling of envy.

Although the people on this bridge are few in numbers , they all share similar thoughts. They all want this whale of a ship to move as if it was their own naturally moving body. To the Abh people, this sensation is a perfectly natural thing to feel.

Lafiel turns her head towards the planar space map, the green dots represents our forces, and the red dots represents the enemy's; both closing on each other.

When the red dot and green dot finally meet, they become a purple dot. On a planar space map, a purple dot represents combat taking place in that bubble.

Then, more purple dots begin to appear. So now, it is the Flicaubh's turn to become a purple dot. The Flicaubh fused with enemy space-time bubble 1-0-2. A bit off in the future, this space-time bubble will be temporally referred as "space-time bubble battle 1-7."

"Firing!" Arubofu fires the electromagnetic rail cannons as they began to fuse with the enemy's space-time bubble. The body of the ship shook with a creaking sound.

"space-time fusion complete." Ekuryua murmured in a soft sleepy voice.

When both space-time bubbles officially became one, six guided nuclear warheads emerged going straight for the Flicaubh; every mobile cannon that can shoot forward lights up. Sensing this, the guided warheads accelerate to one percent of the speed of light, making them even more difficult of a target than the mines. Still, the mobile cannons were able to shoot one down, turning it into harmless debris.

Arubofu lets the ship glide horizontally in an attempt to avoid the remaining warheads. One of those warheads passed by the left side of the Flicaubh, and the cannon banks immediately started shooting at it.

The warheads that the Flicaubh shot earlier at the enemy ship were not able to hit their target, therefore a second round was loaded and ready to fire.

Quickly, the electromagnetic rail cannon vigorously fires its next shot, but this shot also came up empty. Lafiel starts to feel anxious, wishing that at this moment Arubofu would just somehow faint right in front of her.

Although during times of war, every ship feels like it doesn't have enough manpower; one can say that the crew of an assault frigate gets the least amount of personal time. Of course the bridge officers are of no exception. Let's take the gunnery officer for example, on the Flicaubh there is only Arubofu, if he were to become incapable to carry out his duties, the only person that could replace him would be the captain herself.

Of course, no captain would like to see their own subordinates getting hurt, even if they were joking. If the ship were to be damaged to a point where someone becomes critically injured, then the lives of the rest of the crew are also in grave danger.

Therefore, she only hopes that Arubofu collapses due to overwork. Even though she continues to burn with jealousy, being the captain still means that there is other work for the captain to do.

"Gunomuboshu," Lafiel orders, "Change mobile cannon range to infinite."

After exchanging fire, the Flicaubh and the enemy ship pass by each other.

Compared to the small and nimble mines, a cruiser is a much easier target to hit. Before, it was difficult to know what was the best distance to set for in order to hit the mines, but now the beams I fire will most likely hit the cruisers no matter the distance.

Both ships fire their mobile cannons at each-other, damaging both ships; of course these are just flesh wounds. Suppose these ion cannons were enough to sink a large ship, then there would not be a need to install things like the proton cannon or the electromagnetic rail cannons.

After the ships pass by each other, both simultaneously fire their electromagnetic rail cannons on the rear of the ships.

A missile from the enemy exploded near the Flicaubh. The shockwave and shrapnel from the missile hit the rear of the ship.

"Number two cargo hold sprung a leak," Jinto reports, "No casualties reported, no disturbance in ship pressure."

In seeking to deal a critical blow to each other, both ships joust for the best position.

Lafiel's directs her attention on the planar space map. It looks like one of the battles taking place in a space-time bubble has been decided. The only thing seen is that space-time bubble battle 2-1's color changed from purple to yellow: indicating unknown identity. Additionally, this space-time bubble is heading slowly towards here.

"We have yet to receive any identification signal." Yateshu reports, "looks like the Takukov has already been sunk."

The once former yellow space-time bubble was quickly dyed red, designated enemy space-time bubble 211, and continues to approach this location.

"Hurry up and finish this!" Lafiel said to Arubofu, "A new enemy will soon arrive. Unless you think that there is no accomplishment in just fighting one ship, then I can go with that too."

"Captain, you can stop teasing me," replied Arubofu, " This also pertains to my life as well!"

"Just thinking about my own insignificant life has already overwhelmed me!" Arubofu explains.

"Executive officer," Lafiel said, "move the space-time bubble heading towards 10 o'clock"

"Yes ma'am." Ekuryua starts on her space-time bubble task.

However currently, the space-time bubble that the Flicaubh resides is no longer its own; after all, the enemy ship is also equipped with a space-time generator.

To the Flicaubh they are a new enemy, to the enemy they are reinforcement. Therefore the enemies would certainly want to get near each other.

The two space-time generators in the bubbles start a tug-of-war.

When it comes to skill, Ekuryua seems to have the upper hand, although the orbit is not very centered, but the space-time bubble battle 1-7 already starts to move towards 10 o'clock.

However, the pursuing enemy space-time bubble is still relatively fast.

Although the Flicaubh possesses the better firing position and even though they shot at the enemy ship's side abdomen with their nuclear warheads; it was still dodged by the enemy.

When it comes to our bows being exposed, it goes right into the enemy's mobile cannon's line of fire.

"Electromagnetic rail cannon number one have been damaged!" Arubofu said loudly.

Even if they are ion cannons, once in a while they can also deal this degree of damage.

"Is it repairable?" Lafiel asks Gurinshia.

"Negative." The chief engineer answered without hesitation.

"Forget it, there are always other ways." Arubofu took the initiative and shouldered the blame.

"I understand." Lafiel nodded.

The enemy's thrusters start to fire up; their bow prepares to turn towards the Flicaubh.

The Flicaubh's main engines are also brought to maximum, in an attempt to close the distance before the enemy finishes turning.

The speed I have set will indeed give us the edge; before the enemy can fully turn their bow, the Flicaubh should be able to come behind them.

"Aim the mobile cannon banks at the enemy's thrusters , can you do that?" Lafiel asks.

"Yes, I'll do my best." Gunomuboshu responds.

Lafiel thought to herself, *I'll give you this one opportunity, if you cannot do it, then I will control the mobile cannon banks myself.*

No matter how you look at it, this is a battlefield; moreover, a battlefield in a very harsh environment. Although this is a most fitting place to train a junior officer, one cannot stake the lives of the rest of the crew just to train this one junior officer. Besides, even Lafiel believes that she herself has many things that she needs training on.

In an intense exchange of ion cannon fire, both ships grazed each other. Gunomuboshu adjusts the mobile cannon bank's scope of fire locking on to the enemy's thrusters.

Two thruster ports were spectacularly damaged, but from this angle it is hard to determine the extent of the damage.

Perhaps both thrusters were totally destroyed, but it is also possible that the enemy ship only suffered minor hull disfiguration.

"Good job!" Arubofu said with great praise, even if the latter were to be true.

When the Flicaubh opened some distances, it quickly fired the rear electromagnetic rail cannons, but it still misses.

"When will the enemy fuse with us?" Lafiel asks.

"The time now is 1-3-3-0, they'll be here in eight minutes." Ekuryua answered immediately.

"Extend the time to fusion to 1-3-4-0." Lafiel ordered.

"Impossible." Ekuryua concisely responded.

"Did you hear that? Vanguard Flyer Arubofu." Lafiel turns to ask the gunnery officer.

"Yes, I heard very clearly." Arubofu said, "I really hate these ears that pick up sounds."

Looks like the gunnery officer could still cope with this sort of situation.

"Then hurry up and finish this already."

Both ships now try to maneuver to get a good shot at each other's sides. However the enemy ship has noticeably slowed down. It looks like within this battle, the control of the mobile cannon banks can stay with Gunomuboshu.

At this time the Flicaubh's engines roars up again, rapidly closing the gap again on the enemy vessel.

After another round of electromagnetic rail cannon has been fired, a sudden sound was heard by the captain. The owner of that sound is Arubofu who is urgently firing the thrusters on the left side of the ship.

A number of nuclear warheads flew by the Flicaubh's left side. It seems that these warheads were estimated, at this short distance the damage dealt should be pretty extensive, as they all simultaneously exploded; making the Flicaubh shake violently.

“Number 201, 202, 205 ...” Gunomuboshu starts to report one by one the numbers of the damaged ion cannons.

"You don't need to report about this." Lafiel stops him from continuing his report, "It's ok as long as you concentrate on the enemy's thrusters."

"I'm very sorry!"

Lafiel, without saying a word, coldly glanced at the temporary gunnery officer.

Gunomuboshu quickly drew in his neck, and corrected himself saying, "Yes ma'am."

"There are too many damaged areas; it will be too much burden for the engineering squad." Gurinshia said, "Please point out the section with the highest priority."

"The engines." Lafiel immediately responded. "I will not allow my ship to fly on a broken wing."

"Yes, ma'am." The chief immediately pounded away at the desk console continuously giving his subordinate detailed orders.

During times like these, if it were Samson sitting there, then he would probably say in a critical tone how Star Force regulation is against overworking the crew.

Just when the chief engineer is giving out orders, both vessels are once again closing on each other. It was already too late to change course again, therefore both ships once again grazed each other exchanging heavy rounds of beam fire.

As Lafiel listens to the damage report, she also looks at the planar space map; the enemy's space-time bubble 2-1-1 is already pretty close to where the space-time bubble battle 1-7 is at. If they were to maintain a one vs. one tactic then their next attack may be their last chance, but the Flicaubh still has hope.

"The Marusukov is approaching." Ekuryua said.

Looks like the Marusukov has just disposed of their enemy and has decided to come as backup; although disgraceful as this is, it cannot be helped.

"This ship will now head towards the Marusukov." Although Lafiel forces herself to give out these orders, but the enemy still has the upper hand when it comes to speed.

Even if Lafiel doesn't say anything, Arubofu understands the grave nature of the situation.

"Captain," Arubofu's voice revealed his anxiousness, " The next shot will determine the victor."

"Alright, I'll look forward to your performance."

Fortunately the result of the effort put in by the junior officer is starting to show. The enemy's engine power has noticeably weakened. The electromagnetic rail cannons on the bow of the Flicaubh all simultaneously fire.

Three nuclear fusion warheads hurl themselves straight at the enemy vessel. Although these warheads are equipped with their own engines, because their

output strength is too weak even if they wanted to change course, it would only change by a little. However, that much is already enough.

As one of the warhead managed to change course during mid flight and slammed straight into the belly of the enemy ship, successfully penetrating the enemy's outer armor.

"GOT EM!" Arubofu shouted unable to contain himself .

At this moment, the enemy ship is covered in anti-matter fuel, and is completely converted into energy

"space-time separation, quickly." Lafiel ordered.

As the mass in a space-time bubble rises, its speed will proportionally go down. In order to maintain its swift movement, jettisoning excesses masses from within the bubble is a necessity.

The space-time bubble covering the Flicaubh starts to jettison what was just now the enemy ship, creating ripples upon ripples of space-time particles.

"Executive officer, proceed towards the Marusukov. Communications officer, send out a signal of identification. Chief engineer and supply officer, give me a damage report." Lafiel orders.

The people on the bridge once again became busy; however Arubofu who just completed his task went into a trance-like state.

"If you feel tired, then should I temporally take over your position?" Lafiel asks with the best of intentions.

"Sorry, I couldn't possibly allow myself to let you do that, captain."

"I see." hiding her disappointment Lafiel turned back to the captain's display console.

On the console were displayed both damage reports from Gurinshia and Jinto. Although the engines were luckily spared from any serious damages, their combat ability has dropped significantly.

In theory this ship should be able to commence combat operations with the Marusukov, but in reality they should look into the situation of that ship before making a decision.

"Initiate inter-bubble message to the flagship." Lafied orderd Yateshu to report to the squadron flagship Shutukov of their damages, and that they will be awaiting orders.

"Incoming message from the Shutukov." The communication officer reports, "Both Marusukov and Flicaubh will engage enemy space-time bubble 211 together, over."

"Looks like the commander won't let us rest so easily." Lafiel exposes a smile. Presently they have to temporarily hold off on mourning the dead.

Very well, although there is no way for me to control the ship myself, the blood boiling in my body is endlessly bubbling up.

"Communications officer, initiate inter-bubble communication with the Marusukov." Lafiel orders, then picking up the microphone to once again speak into the

internal broadcast system, "This is the Captain reporting, this ship will soon engage in another battle!"

The war between The Humankind Empire of Abh and the Three Nations Alliance is in its seventh year. Up until now, the empire still has the upper hand.

Through three years of preparation, the empire initiated Operation Phantom Flame which had cut off about 1/4 of the United Mankind's star systems.

Then the Empire launched Operation Hunter with the task of recovering territories wrested from it at the outbreak of the war. After this operation, the empire had completely recovered those territories and also started to consolidate new territories that were gained. Afterwards, a period of peace came to planar space.

Although recovering lost territories, the Empire enacts a strict control policy to newly gained territories that has knowledge of planar space travel. However, the Empire does not completely control things on the planet surface of those territories, only the planar space around it. After all, as long as these people living on the planet don't enter planar space. It is the Abh's style to just patiently wait until they willingly surrender. Even if this were so,

in the event of a hostile ground world, the Star Force still has to dispatch some forces tasked with monitoring their world.

In order to consolidate their forces to face the next operation, the Empire will continue to monitor unstable worlds, sometimes going as far as to threaten them with military action. On the other hand, after a long deployment in combat, soldiers are required to take a vacation.

Traditionally, the Abh feel that the best place to find love is on the battlefield, but such a place is hardly the most fitting location to pursue such an emotion. This is also the view shared by the overwhelming majority of Abh people. Based on the things mentioned above, most soldiers would rather ask for leave from the Star Force, board a small trading vessel headed for the capital to continue to cultivate the seedling called love.

To these Abh people, war is their day-to-day life, and despite the landers perspective on how the Abh can live a very long time; no matter how long you live there is still a limit. Let alone the Abh themselves feel that their

life span is actually quite short, therefore they have to remember that words like 'war is the primary goal of life' are not to be held true.

Of course, the Empire is continuously on the look-out for the Three Nations Alliance's counter offensive, because for the two previous military operations they have been primarily on the defense. It is obvious that they are saving their main forces for the opportunity when they can counter-attack.

However, the Three Nations Alliance is quite slow to take action; there is virtually no indication of any type of offensive. Therefore during this time when the armies of both sides are at a standstill, one by one the Empire builds more ships, and gradually the Empire finishes training more soldiers for the battles ahead. One by one the ships that went to subjugate planets and soldiers, separated from their love interest, are to return to the battlefront; once again the Empire finishes preparing for the next military operation.

Although the Empire is extremely surprised at how the enemy up until now has still not conducted any offensive operations, it's not like the Empire has decided to take a paid vacation. The Abh's attitude towards the

situation in normal space has always been straightforward and impatient.

A new operation is finally about to begin.

First the empire decided to attack and control the territories between Rusuiisu Kingdom and Syuruguzede Kingdom to the center of the galaxy. At the same time, another force would start from Baruke Kingdom and force their way up along the borders of United Mankind and People's Sovereign Stellar Union to the center of the galaxy. This way the United Mankind would be completely isolated.

Although some people suspect that even without using planar space, the Three Nations Alliance still have other channels of communications, but the possibility of that is almost non-existent.

The Empire dubbed this operation as "Twin Thorns".

As was customary with grand operations, the commander would be the Crown Prince and Commander-in-Chief of the Imperial Fleet, Marshall Ablïarsec Néïc Lamsar Larth Barcœr Dusanh (Dusanyu). However because this operation would require two extended fronts, the Crown Prince decided, in light of

this situation, to prepare to stay in Lakfakalle in order to plan both fronts.

In reality the people in command of the two massive fleets are two deputy commanders-in-chiefs. The one in command of the fleet in the new territories is also the deputy commander-in-chief of Operation Twin Thorns, Star Force Marshall Cotoponic. The one in charge of the Baruke Kingdom front is also another deputy commander-in-chief of Operation Twin Thorns, Star Force Marshall Trife.

As for Deputy Hecto-Commander Ablïarsec's assault frigate the Flicaubh, it belongs in the 24th Twin Thorns Fleet, the Assault Division Bosuru, and the 1st Devastation Squadron.

"Captain, it's the signal to retreat!"

Not long after the Flicaubh and the Marusukov together sent the enemy to their graves, that message came from the Shutukov.

The flagship of the 24th Twin Thorns Fleet the Erukau sent out the retreat signal. All ships that receive the

signal should also send the same signal out. The whole fleet is soon resonating the retreat signal, creating a burst of planar space disturbance.

"Relay it immediately." Lafiel orders, however the Flicaubh should be one of the last ships to receive the signal. "Begin space-time separation."

The Flicaubh once again returned to its single space-time bubble.

"Is there any instructions from the fleet flagship?" Lafiel asks the communication officer.

"Nothing ye... no, I just received it." Yateshu begins to decrypt the message, "Sender: 1st scourge squadron headquarters; Receiver: all ships under our command. The message is: "fall back and assemble at the squadron base-of-operations. Over."

To put it simply, the commanding officer wants all ship captains to determine their own course of retreat. It looks like our commanding officer really has a lot of trust in us.

"Put our space-time bubble into standstill mode."

Although Lafiel issued the order, Ekuryua did not immediately carry it out. In fact she looked at her with a surprised glance.

"Continue to follow the space-time particle flow, and be on the lookout for any changes." Lafiel clarifies.

"Yes ma'am." Ekuryua nodded. "space-time bubble is now maintaining a standstill mode."

Lafiel focuses her gaze on the planar space map.

The battlefront is, as usual, confusing as ever, in combat zones space-time bubbles are seen everywhere. Also there are enemies chasing ships that are trying to retreat from the battlefront. But this chaotic state was already gradually becoming more controlled.

"We intercepted what seems to be the enemy fleet's retreat signal!" Yateshu's report means an end to the chaos.

The enemy squadrons are bit by bit breaking away from the battlefield; of course, our side does not show any signs of giving chase.

It looks like the battlefront of our fleet has stretched quite a distance. Lafiel gives her next set of orders, " Change space-time bubble to complete movement mode, heading degrees 108. Retreat along the space-time particle flow to Sokuratesu star system. We are relieved of our position in battle. Chief Engineer!"

Right when the Captain called him, Gurinshia raised his head.

"Is there any need for emergency repairs?"

"Negative, Captain." Gurinshia responds, "Although the situation is very bad, we could probably still manage to make it back to dock."

"Then, you should just let your men take a rest."

"They will definitely be happy to hear that." Gurinshia stood up and said, "However, I hope I could start compiling a list of things that require repairs. Captain, please allow me to leave the bridge."

"Then I'll leave it to you." Lafiel turns her head towards Jinto.

"Captain, there are zero casualties, and there is no change in the interior environment of the ship." Jinto responded before Lafiel has a chance to ask.

"Very well." After Lafiel said those two words in her heart, she allowed herself to lie onto the back of the captain's chair.

She knows perfectly well how nervous she is. Although the words "War like Ablïarsec" are widespread saying among the Abhs, Lafiel also does not disagree with this statement. However this does not indicate that she herself treats the lives of her subordinates as expendable, and can still stay calm in a hair-trigger situation. Besides, without this nervousness, war would be but a constant exercise in boredom. But then again, some portion of landers appears to misunderstand the Abh as a people that enjoys massacring. This type of misunderstanding is really a gross exaggeration. To Lafiel, the Abh people only want to protect their right to live.

"How many more times do we need to fight this war?" Arubofu mumbles to himself.

"If we can defeat the enemy, then we should be able to relax right?" Gunomuboshu cautiously spoke his opinions.

"If that were the case, then they shouldn't even fight in the first place."

"Everybody has done bad things sometimes in their lives."

Arubofu can't help but smile, "But you do know what we don't do bad things right?"

"Really?" Gunomuboshu's quiets down with a confused looking face.

"If the enemy surrenders right now," Arubofu said to Gunomuboshu, "don't you feel that you have not fought enough?"

"Nope, there probably will be lots of more opportunities in the future."

"What! So basically you think that as long as the enemies in this system surrenders then everything will be fine? I originally thought you have a bit larger take on the whole situation."

"It can't be that the vanguard flyer feels that he has also not fought enough?"

"Of course not, I have already fought more than I can take."

"Really?" Lafiel inserts in the conversation, "I have never noticed that. Of course you could always file for a transfer early, do you want to be instructor in the engineering academy?"

"No, Captain could you please just forget what I just said. Actually I have decided to stay as a Gunnery Officer for the rest of my military career."

Of course, what Lafiel just said was just a joke. Arubofu is obviously a highly skilled Gunnery officer, and is also an even more valuable subordinate. Let alone Lafiel once used her power as a captain to check the

personal records of each crew. She understands very well the thoughts in Arubofu's heart can only be wished for from a talented Abh.

"Then it should be very difficult right?" Gunomuboshu said, "As the Vangard Flyer you can always get promoted. Maybe your next assignment will be the captain of your own attack ship."

Arubofu only opened his mouth and laughed a bit.

"Actually, Line Wing Flyer," Yateshu explains to Gunomuboshu, "This person has already twice declined the promotions to Deca-Commander."

"Why?" Gunomuboshu asked the gunnery officer with a bewildered look on his face.

"Didn't I already say it? I am already satisfied with being a gunnery officer. No wait, actually I could be plenty satisfied with just flying the ship. If I were to be promoted, then I will no longer have this opportunity. Even if I could fly another ship, I don't want to fly any transport ships nor any line-of-battle ships.”

"But you can also be a pilot by being the captain of an attack ship." Gunomuboshu points out Arubofu's flaw, "

If you have to make a comparison, don't you think that being an attack ship captain gives you more freedom?"

"I certainly don't think so." Arubofu said, "To shoulder the responsibilities of a whole ship really is overwhelming. I think it is best to work in a post where the responsibilities are relatively light."

"The Gunnery Officer's responsibilities are also quite heavy too." Lafiel said.

"What you said is very true, Captain." Arubofu did not refute that, "But, if you compare the responsibilities between the Gunnery Officer and the Captain, then I think the responsibilities of the captain are still heavier. Actually as long as you are happy the weight of your responsibilities should not matter, but there has to be a limit to the amount of weight.

"Gunnery officer is your limit then?"

"Yes," Arubofu said while nodding, "To decide the extent of one's promotion limit is a privilege that Royalty cannot enjoy. Don't you feel very envious?"

Lafiel almost agreed with this Gunnery Officer's logic without giving it deeper thought; because it is the duty of

Royalty to accept promotions given to them. Although Lafiel's father, Dubleuscr Larth Dubeusec, once said that he has given up on being the emperor a long time ago, but before the start of the war he was already promoted to the position of Admiral. From the time that war had broken out until now, he had been further promoted to grand admiral and now commands an active fleet on the battlefield. Even if it is not possible to achieve the rank of commander-in-chief of the Empire's fleets, all Royalty, before retirement from the Star Force, hope to possess a high enough military ranking to be in charge of their own fleets. They also bear the great responsibility of supporting the Star Force from the side whenever the empire is in a time of crisis.

Much less right now is already a time of war; therefore Lafiel doesn't have choice in the matter. She can only intently aim for a high goal.

From birth this view has been ingrained as what is certain, and right now she does not have any objections to this way of life. Only that she will sometimes suddenly feel a wave of disdain towards this unjust fact.

"What is your dream, Gunomuboshu?" Lafiel steered the conversation towards the line wing flyer.

"My dream is to become an admiral." Gunomuboshu answers without the least bit of hesitation.

"I have not heard such an ending direct dream in a while." Yateshu said in a mischievous tone.

"Who told you to live under a rock anyways." This was Arubofu's assessment. "Speaking of which, what is your dream?"

"You are talking about me?" Yateshu looks like he is very hesitant, "Well, how do I say this. As long as I get a star, then I'll be plenty satisfied."

"Hum, so all this time you were having the delusion of becoming a baron?"

"It is also nothing more than a mere delusion."

Current the mood inside Flicaubh is still pretty warm and fragrant; this should be considered a good thing. The next time they go into battle, it is always the responsibility of Lafiel to keep everyone alive so they can return safely.

The Kemal Sord is a fairly well protected stronghold.

The People's Sovereign Stellar Union uses a type of weapon called the "ultra long-range autonomous space-time mines." Just as its name suggested, they are a type of mines with the range of small warships. However due to this type of mine being an unmanned weapon, it has almost zero flexibility. Adding to the fact that in normal space they are less agile than normal mines, therefore the use of this type of weapon has strict limitations.

Although the Abh consider The People's Sovereign Stellar Union to be one of the most boring opponents among landers nations. They regard that nation, who values the uses of these ultra long-range autonomous space-time mines as weapons that has strict limitations, with a "marvelous" evaluation. In addition, the use of this type of uncommon weapon in the defense of the Kemal Sord also provided them with a fairly powerful advantage.

Inside the Kernel Sord there appears to exist a large amount of these ultra long-range autonomous space-time mines manufacturing plants. In addition, the raw materials are supplied from within the system. That is, the enemy would never have to worry about running low on ammunition.

The Star Force originally decided to gather the guard ship squadrons and use them to attack the enemy. However, if these guard ships were to be separated from the assault ships or cruisers, then they become very vulnerable. If a wave of space-time bubble mines were to also contain any enemy space-time bubble ships among them, then the result would be more disastrous.

In a war before you have any record of the enemy's capabilities; there is always a few times where normal skirmishes are fought. During this time, it is a necessity to chip away at the power of the enemy fleet. Of course, (the Star Force?) knows this very well.

To The People's Sovereign Stellar Union, the battle to meet the approaching enemy this time should be mostly probing in nature. Thinking carefully, this is probably their first time to carry out a formal combat operation. Before, this nation acted just like a scared child afraid of being discarded by his friends. The Abh's impression of them is that they are fighting this one purely symbolic battle as a sign of cooperation with the United Mankind.

Even at the start of the Twin-Thorn's operation, when the empire already started invading their star systems; the People's Sovereign Stellar Union were still not very

willing to fight. Perhaps it was their plan to draw the Star Force deep into their territory. But the rear guard Twin-Thorn's 25th fleet would fight courageously to ensure that the Star Force can always communicate vital information back to the empire headquarters. This type of strategy has no real significance, as long as the time comes when the branch of the thorn completes its growth , then the People's Sovereign Stellar Union would be completely isolated from their allies outside.

When the battlefront, at last, almost reached the door steps of the Kemal Sord, The People's Sovereign Stellar Union also seemed to finally start to take the battle more seriously. To most of the frontline troops, this fact is actually joyful to some, but also at the same time it means that many fierce battles ahead are seemingly unavoidable.

Thinking up to now, Lafiel, while maintaining her composure, peered a glance at Ekuryua – 'What would her dream be?'

Although Lafiel proceeded to open her mouth, she did not actually ask the question. "I'm going to take a rest, Ekuryua; I'll leave everything to you. The crew is to take turns resting according to their schedule."

"Understood." was Ekuryua's response

Chapter 2: Line-of-Battle Ship “Kaisofu”

The other branch of the twin-thorn is also currently growing at a smooth pace.

With the twin-thorns 11th fleet in the lead they gradually force their way to the center (of the galaxy). Their main enemy on this side is the United Mankind.

If this operation were to be successfully completed, then the United Mankind’s sphere of influence will also diminish by more than half as well. At the same time, communications between their ally the Greater Alkont Republic will also be severed.

In other words, the main goal of the twin-thorns operation is to cut off all channels of communications between the three linked allied nations; making each of the three nations sink into a state of isolation.

The heart of the Twin Thorns Operation is the 13th fleet. Their flag ship, the patrol ship Shaikau, is currently anchored within Elcon star system, nearby the port facilities.

Two WesDaghs (200 meters) away stood the attack division, Guderusu, patrolling around the orbit of the

Shaikau. One of those ships was the Line-of-Battle ship Kaisofu.

A Line-of-Battle ship is a type of ship that is loaded a large amount of time-space mines. Their only mission on the battlefield is to launch these mines. These Line-of-Battle ships are basically minelaying mother-ships. Although Line-of-Battle vessels are equipped with an enormous amount of defensive weapons, they are in essence transport vessels.

The Empire’s mines may be considered small in size compared to the one People's Sovereign Stellar Union uses, but what they lack in size they make up with tremendous volume. Despite thousands of years of improvements, the time-space generator machine still occupies a considerable amount of space. Also, the amount of anti-matter fuel it needs cannot be overlooked.

Therefore, the ship of the line, which carries a large amount of mines, is just monstrous in size. It has nearly the equivalent of three patrol ships in mass.

The Line-of-Battle ship is not only famous for its enormity but also the amount of personnel needed. Normally, most of the people that are onboard a ship of

the empire are engineers, and they all have their individual duties to maintain the ship. However, among the crew of the ship-of-the-line, other than the engineers responsible for maintaining ship operation, there are many specialized mine (insert any cool title here) engineers that take care of the mines.

Under these conditions, the scale of the residential area of the Line-of-Battle ship is not as expanse as a city, but can be considered at least the size of a village. In addition , the Abhs consider Line-of-Battle ship and transport ships to be a “children’s vessel”.

The significance of that name is recognized as an old age star force tradition. Long ago, regardless of the size of the ship, peace or war; warships are where the Abhs raise their children. To the Abh who consider space as home, raising their children this way is only natural.

However, when the Abh became aware of the enemy’s negative view of “bringing children into battle”, they reassessed their policies and quickly abolished the tradition. Because the Abh worries the enemy would misunderstand — or to say accidently discover — the

Abhs would go into battle half-heartily. The Abhs consider this as respectful to the enemies who are willing to meet on the battlefield and fight to the death.

Even though during times of peace, the Star Force permits soldiers to take their children to the bridge to while carrying out their duty. However, because the benefits outweigh the costs; these days, the Star Force would not place flyers raising children on small scale vessels.

However, on large scale vessels such as the ship-of-the-line, the military still allows soldiers to bring their children on duty. Of course, this is only allowed during peace time. Except special circumstances, personnel other than soldiers are strictly prohibited from boarding a military vessel.

The Kaisofu’s residential area is also originally allocated space to setup a nursery. Because this warship was built after the breakout of war, therefore there has not been one child that has played in that area. Instead, during the early phases of outfitting sections of the warship, this space was already outfitted to something that has nothing to do with a nursery at all.

Right now it is a mess hall for flyers. The thought among the crew of the fleet is that, converting the nursery to the flyer mess hall is relatively convenient to achieve. If the Kaisofu were able smoothly come out of this war in one piece, then maybe this area will be reconverted into a nursery.

However, Deputy Signal Officer Line Wing Flyer Duhir of the Kaisofu does not like this place.

“Deputy Signal Officer Line Wing Flyer!”

“Yes, Captain”, responded Line-of-Battle ship Kaisofu’s Deputy Signal Officer Line Wing Flyer Ablïarsec Néïc Dubleuscr Wemdaisal Duhir as he puts down his bowl.

He looks towards where the voice came from. Right now Duhir is sitting at the very end of a long dining table. Every flyer on the Kaisofu dines on this table. The voice came from a person sitting at the center*; a male with blue hair and the captain of the Kaisofu, Hecto-Commander Berusot. (*TL note: or wherever the ‘power’ seat is)

However, Duhir’s eyes were drawn not to the captain, but to the wall behind him.

Although this place has been converted into a mess hall, the walls are still that of a nursery. Since everyone staying in this room are all children; during the initial design of this room, they must take into consideration shrapnel ricocheting off the walls in zero gravity. Therefore, the walls are fitted with a high-grade impact absorption material. Also, the wall is covered with pictures of winged cats and smiling stars. In short, it’s all filled with pictures only a child would enjoy.

When Duhir thought about his childhood, he was similar to most Abh children. They all like to collide into the wall and enjoy the sensation of being absorbed by it. It was a nostalgic feeling.

“Your face looks so boring.” Said Berusot bluntly.

These words pull Duhir out of his thoughts and back to reality.

The reason that Duhir does not like the flyer’s mess hall is because of the custom that all the flyers aboard the Kaisofu go to the hall at the same time. However, saying that is not totally correct, he actually is annoyed at the

fact that the traditional was set in the first place. Moreover, all flyers are forced to respect each other, which include Berusot.

“I don't feel at all bored, if my expression made you feel that I was bored, then that is because ...”

Isn’t it because you felt bored that you would feel that others are bored as well? Duhir thought to himself. Although he will never say this out loud and felt that giving any excuse would do.

“Am I being prejudiced?” asked Berusot, disrupting Duhir’s train of thought.

Duhir slightly bowed and said, “I do not know of any prejudices the captain may have.”

“This... to royalty, can’t be fulfilling to serve on a ship-of-the-line, always far away from the frontlines... this type of prejudice.”

“No matter what the post, an Ablïarsec is ready for death.” Duhir said firmly. At the same time, Duhir begin to think, *perhaps this captain is the one not satisfied in his position.* If this is true, then Duhir should even severely denounce this thought.

“Well said,” says Berusot as he nodded. However his eyes were not upon Duhir but were rather concentrating on a dinner place that just rose slowly from under the table.

“Thank you for your praise.” Says Duhir as he once again picked up his bowl from the table. Only, his long craved pickled crane juice has already gotten cold.

“I was not praising you.” Berusot said as he picked up another entrée.

“Is that so?” asks Duhir as he also puts his bowl aside, and set in front of him a new entrée he just picked up. The new dish is tangerine flavored roast pork.

This is ok too, actually being praised by this captain is not something to be happy about.

Just as he had this thought, Berusot already started to bite into his roast as he said, “I, of course, have no intention of dying in this type of place.”

“You say you don't have any consciousness to die, then why did you come to the battlefield?” Line Wing Flyer Duhir asks without even time to put down his

chopsticks. However, he immediately worried that his tone may have sounded like he was interrogating a senior officer.

“You can’t really be just seeking for a place to die when you enter the battlefield?” at least based on his expressions, Berusot does not seem to be mad. However, the captain starts to gaze at the dining table. “In my opinion, there are no thoughts more unfortunate than this.”

“I haven't yet given it much thought,” says Duhir strongly to defend himself, “However, if we are just talking about the end, then I cannot rule out the possibility. To me, a so-called ‘death place’ is one where I carve my name into the ‘monument of no regret’ without shame. Also, I do not feel this vessel is something I feel ashamed of.”

“My intention was not to deny your opinion. It is true that there is nothing to be ashamed of dieing on this ship, but it’s nothing to be proud of either.”

“I feel the captain’s chair is the best place to die.” Berusot says bluntly.

“Listen up, you may become the emperor in the future and that may be well. After you do ascend to the throne I hope you may reminisce of me once in a while. But even if that day does come, you cannot causally allow your own worth to be imposed by someone else. Much less now since you are only a Line Wing Flyer, the lowest ranked officer in the bridge. If my cat were still here, at your rank, you would be responsible for feeding him!”

Duhir feels in his heart that he is lucky that his seat is one that is relatively far away from the captain’s chair. If Berusot’s hands were long enough, when he is passing on his experiences, he would definitely pat Duhir’s head firmly. Maybe this is his way showing friendliness, but Duhir really cannot bear to be treated like this.

“I am very sorry.”

“Those who are Princes should not apologize so casually.”

“Then just what type of attitude should I show towards my captain?”

“I guess it all depends on my mood.”

Duhir feels like he is walking down a dead-end.

“Of course I’m not asking you to read my mind.”

“I’m grateful for the captain’s empathy.” Duhir said with caution.

“I want you to feel with intuition.”

“Are there any difference between the two?”

“Of course there are differences!” said Berusot as he starts to disregard his etiquette, waving the chopsticks in the air without restraint, “For a person that has a chance to sit in the jade seat* how would you not be clear of the distinctions, you don't have any questions right?” (*TL note: reference from the prologue, where the jade seat was reserved for the emperor or empress of the current empire on their flagship.)

“Could you please point it out for your subordinate?” Duhir said word by word.

“The so-called ‘reading my mind’ requires you to use your brain, but intuition and feel does not require your

brain.” Berusot finally calms his chopsticks. “If you do not begin to think, then it is natural that thoughts from deep within your head to pop out.”

“I believe that intuition and feel are rather difficult.”

“Even if it is difficult, you have to do it. Though, you still do not need to get your brain to do that kind of complex task. You are but only a flyer that does miscellaneous tasks, so just stick with your intuition and feel.”

“I feel you have already brought your subordinate a very unreasonable impression.” Duhir said unhappily.

“You are full of it*, your Prince Majesty.” (*TL note: more like ‘shit’)

Duhir was unable to speak since the other person has already called him the prince, then he cannot go and apologize to him. Duhir believes that he should not apologize, but he has already given up on seriously responding to this captain. If any casual apology can allow Duhir to escape from this conversation, then he would do that.

“Captain, please stop bullying your subordinates.” At this time, the female sitting next to Duhir extends her hand in aid. She is Duhir’s direct superior, Senior Signal Officer Vanguard Flyer Vonyu.

Although Duhir doesn't hate her, he nevertheless can’t stand her either. The way that Vonyu treats Duhir is that of a client in a business deal: an outsider.

It is the same, even now. Although she calls Duhir as ‘ my subordinate’, but from the tone of her voice it is very obvious that those words were more of a joke. Duhir thinks to himself, Vonyu doesn't actually think Duhir as her subordinate but more like partners on the same ship.

“These words have two points that requires correction. ” Berusot said.

“Please speak.” Vonyu said as if she was facing bitter tea.

“First, I am just having a conversation with my subordinate, not bickering with your subordinate. Your opinion may be a bit excessive.”

“What you said is not wrong, however...” begins to retort by this Senior Signal Officer Vanguard Flyer with a head full of elegant grass colored hair.

But Berusot forcefully cuts her words short, “The other point is, I did not mean to bully him.”

“Then we have a difference of opinions.” Said Vonyu, “Since it’s like this, why is the captain being so forceful? It can’t be that you are really teaching him a lesson out of love?”

“I am merely following family tradition.”

Duhir was very surprised, unable to contain his mouth he asks, “Is the Captain from (or direct descendent of) the Spaurh clan?”

This doesn't seem likely, because many side families in that clan use the name Spaurh. This is different from the Imperial family, where only direct descendants may use the family name Ablïarsec.

“Something like that.” Berusot said vaguely.

Duhir waits patiently for the captain to continue.

“Because the family clans were decided before the establishment of the empire, so strictly speaking we are not of the same clan.” Explains Berusot

“Even using the broadest sense, you are still not of their clan!” Vonyu responded sharply.

In short, the captain’s ancestors should be working in the engine department of the Abläarsec’s city ship, Duhir speculates.

The Spaurh clan is actually descendants of engine department when the empire was established. At that time, inside that large spaceship that held the entire civilization of the Abh people, every department had its own perspective clan to manage it. Therefore if Berusot’s family is really descendants of someone formerly working in the engine department, then more or less they may have traditions of the Spaurh family. According to Abh knowledge, this situation could be said as a blood connection. But even by Abh logic, saying that you have blood connection to people thousands of years ago is really a stretch.

“However, it is said that the intelligence of the navigation crew determined the engine crew’s positions! ”

“I have never heard of this saying in my clan.” Said Duhir.

“I think you may not be especially concerned with the relations?” Berusot said firmly.

“Even if that is so, you cannot bring that into what we are discussing now.” Vonyu said.

“I am not a person to allow business to turn my backs on family tradition!”

“Although saying that is very impolite, but I thought that as captain chances for me to display my family tradition should be miniscule.”

“If this is truly the captain’s family tradition, then it would be too much for anyone to respect it.” Vonyu said in a tone full of misgiving.

This delightful argument continues between Berusot and Vonyu. Although Duhir does fully not understand

their goal; he feels that if this isn’t to help digestion then it may just have some kind of mysterious usefulness.

The other flyers seems to have already been used to this, already some among them are happily starting conversations that are unrelated to the Captain and the Senior Signal Officer. Others continue to quietly dine on their meal.

Because Duhir cannot find someone to chat with, he also became one of those quietly dining away.

“What are you drinking, Line Wing Flyer?” Berusot’s voice came suddenly.

“Are you asking what drink I am having?” responded Duhir who did not expect the captain to ask this kind of question, “It’s hot til nom (peach juice).”

“You sure like weird drinks.”

“Is it really?” responded the annoyed Duhir, “My sister sure likes it a lot.”

“Your sister, is it her Majesty Lafiel?” asked Berusot after thinking for a bit.

“I do not have any other siblings.”

“Really? Anyways, will her Majesty Lafiel be annoyed if her favorite drink is denied by someone?”

“No matter what it is, she does not like her indulgences to be teased by others.”

“Really? Never mind, I might as well try some too.”

Duhir is perplexed and does not know how to respond . To invite the captain to try it would likely continue the argument, while asking him to stop would be awkward too.

However, Duhir no longer needs to respond because Berusot’s attention has already shifted onto another topic .

The meal finally comes to an end as tea is being passed out one by one to everyone in the dining table.

“We have but only now for everyone to dine together. ” Berusot starts to speak. Usually in this situation, the captain will always use those words to end meal time for bridge crew.

“XO, what is the schedule for today?” Berusot asks.

“Today is the day we need to go pick up luggage.” His XO, Deca-commander Kurobosu, replies.

“Ah, that's right.” Berusot said as he crosses his arms in front of his chest.

In the last battle, the Kaisofu already depleted half of its mines. In preparation for the next battle, this Line-of-Battle ship requires resupplying and today is that day.

“Excuse me.” said Duhir suddenly, standing up with determination.

Berusot stares with doubt.

“May I request to leave the duty of piloting to me?”

In assault ships and cruisers, the direct impact of the pilot’s skill in combat is different. In a ship-of-the-line, as long as you are a bridge officer anyone can carry out this task. Therefore in a Line-of-Battle ship the person in charge of piloting is not the captain and not the gunnery officer, but the deputy navigator, a person of lowest rank .

Much less today’s task which does not require combat maneuvers. Under these conditions even on assault ships , the task would be forced upon lowest ranking officer.

The so-called ‘forced’ is actually from the point of view from experienced flyers. To them, piloting a Line-of-Battle ship or a transport ship is not fun at all. However, this really is a good experience for new flyers. It is no wonder that Duhir happily asks the captain to give him the opportunity.

“Whoa! I like your expression. Line Wing Flyer, I cannot help but want to order you to do so.”

“Then...”

“Unfortunately, no.” Berusot said.

“Please tell me the reason.” Duhir’s tone became more unyielding.

Although he strictly warns himself not to use his royalty status to force others; but to a new flyer this level of request should be still within allowance.

“I do not need to give you a reason.” Berusot also said without any hesitation.

“I understand.” Responded Duhir as he saluted the captain. Any further request would be out of line. “ Please forgive me for my rudeness.”

“No, actually you were not rude at all just now.” Berusot said with a malicious laugh.

Duhir finds himself more and more annoyed at this person.

To replace a ship of the line’s weapons, which are mines, is a difficult task. The reason is because of the large volume.

Actually, this has not been such a problem in the past. Back then they only needed enough mines for one battle. If they emptied their entire cache, they would only need to go back to the capital to resupply.

However, as the battlefront keeps on extending, doing so no longer works. After all, if every Line-of-Battle ship goes back to the capital to resupply after every battle, it would become troublesome tactically. At the same time,

making transport ships continuously go back and forth to resupply mines would be too inefficient; knowing that the transport ships hold at best no more than one battle requirement payload of mines for a ship-of-the-line. So the only difference would be that the Line-of-Battle ship themselves would not have to go back and forth. So instead, the Empire brought the mine factories close to the battlefront.

A mine factory is being developed at Elcon star system . Parts which cannot be manufactured locally, such as space-time bubble generating engines, are brought in on transport ships with materials from nearby star systems.

The Kaisofu also enters the line of vessels near the factory. The ship establishes a data connection with the factory and switches piloting to remote control operation. To express the minimum amount of resistance, Duhir uses the data crystal around his head to obtain a perception of the space outside his ship.

“This is Elcon factory 1-0-2.” The mine factory’s flyer appears on monitor. “Line-of-Battle ship Kaisofu, please activate auto-pilot.”

“Understood.” Berusot responded, “Let’s do that then.”

This should have been Duhir’s job, and also turn his controls of the ship to automatic.

“As you see your Majesty, the so-called piloting is just something like this. There really isn’t much for you to do, really boring right?”

“Yes sir.” Duhir replied in agreement.

So far, from what Duhir can gather from his spatial sensors, the factory’s guiding lights are clearly visible.

The spatial sensors’ image and Kaisofu’s image overlaps completely, Duhir is only pretending to control the ship.

As if responding to Duhir’s control, the Kaisofu begins to fire short bursts of thrusters. After that, this Line-of-Battle ship enters into customary navigation.

“Line-of-Battle ship Kaisofu, please prepare for mine resupply.” Instructs from the mine factory.

“Very well, everything is according to schedule.” Said Berusot as he stood up. “Senior Gunnery Officer, open all hatches.”

“Understood.” Answered Senior Gunnery Officer Deca-Commander Kazuvu.

“Also, Deputy Signal Officer, take your hand out of the control glove.”

“Yes sir.” Duhir responded as he blushed deeply.

As he was doing that, he felt the captain wouldn't have needed to expose him in front of everyone.

“Are you not going to ask me for a reason?” Berusot asked.

“No sir, I will not.”

“I will tell you even if you don't ask, it is because your movements are so obvious.”

“Yes sir.” Although Duhir wondered for a time whether to apologize or not, but at last he decided to casually apologize, “I apologize for my actions.”

“Don't do it again.” said the captain as adds insult to injury.

During of the conversation between the two, the Kaisofu already little by little nears the mine factory.

Numerous transport ships are also near the enormous structure which is the Elcon mine factory 1-0-2’s true appearance. However, the Kaisofu’s destination is not here.

Near the mine factory fields of mines stretching the area of several squads of warships, each gives the impression like it was chopped from an axe and all bundled together: floating in space. This is the Elcon mine factory 1-0-2’s storage center.

Because the Kaisofu requires a special type of mine, the Kaisofu docks beside the man-made structure.

“Initiating resupply.” Came from factory communication.

These mines actually are not filled with anti-matter fuel. As a precaution, the anti-matter fuels are not pumped in until they are ready to be launched. Therefore these mines right now do not have any mobility.

A small transport ship loaded with mines starts to one-by-one resupply the Line-of-Battle ship with mines.

Duhir thinks that maybe the captain won’t even let him pilot a transport ship.

52 hours later, the Kaisofu has been outfitted for battle, and it leaves for the Central Circle as part of the 13th Twin Thorns fleet

Chapter 3: Temptation

"To be able to take up Your Majesty's precious time is an unrivaled honor." Tin Kuihan said as he bowed deeply.

"Time is short, Ambassador." Ramaj said as she waved her hand to display her frustration. "Although I do not mind time wasted on formalities, I however do not plan on sparing you anymore of my time."

"Your Majesty's words are just what I was thinking." - Tin

"Then come." Said Ramaj inviting Tin Kuihan upon the mobile platform.

A bodyguard in the outfit of the platform operator is awaiting orders. Tin Kuihan stares at this bodyguard with unease.

"You can rest assured, Ambassador" Said Ramaj: "A servant's greatest asset is the ability to 'forget'. No matter what you say from this point forth, this person will not utter even one word of it. If you are not certain of my guarantee, then you can keep on wasting your time on pointless formalities."

"I apologize for my seriousness; I do not dare doubt your words." Tin finally joined Ramaj on the mobile platform. "If this is the case, then I will dive directly to my main topic."

Ramaj nodded and gave a look towards the bodyguard to start the mobile platform on its course.

"Has the Prime Minister ever briefed Your Majesty on my reason of coming?" - Tin

"Yes he has." Ramaj thought to herself that it was that business again. "If you are referring to the alliance deal, I trust you already know what my response was to the Prime Minister, and my response has not changed since."

"Well, it is my hopes that both our countries would eternally grow and prosper." - Tin

"That is only natural." - Ramaj

"However, this desire is unlikely to occur." - Tin

"Why do you think this?" - Ramaj.

"It does not matter how this war will progress, our country is already pressed on the verge of destruction." - Tin

"That is unlikely." Says the Empress with an annoyed tone.

Ramaj actually has no interest in whatever fate that awaits the Hania Federation and does not hide this fact. The only reason that she is even talking about this subject is due to just basic courtesy.

"No, this is a fact, although it would be inappropriate for me to be so direct, but …" - Tin

"You need not worry, Ambassador." Ramaj immediately guessed what Tin was trying to get at, " Speaking from the point of an Empress, I will certainly consider the Empire's options if it were to be destroyed, but luckily for us, we are not at a point to even begin considering this question."

"However, that is my greatest fear." Tin lowered his head, "Under those conditions, the Three Nation Alliance

would not easily forgive our nation, and when that time comes, they will find any excuse to declare open war on our nation."

"I believe when that time does come, it would be the critical time when everyone considers their own worth." - Ramaj

"Of course there are those among us that trust we can clear this difficulty on our own. In my opinion, our country is certainly one that relies on the tactic of slipping between powerful nations to maintain our status . To my country, our greatest weapon is our diplomacy and we are very proud of that fact. To that extent, we are certain that after this war is over, we would no longer be able to maintain friendly relations with the Three Nation Alliance. This being the case, the Hania Federation is ramping up our diplomatic efforts, however we believe that this line of thought will not get us our desired result. " - Tin

"When you say 'we' who do you really mean?" - Ramaj

"We are certain that over the course of this battle, Your Majesty's enemies will gradually dwindle down to the United Mankind." - Tin

"Basically, the other two countries will be swallowed (annexed) by the United Mankind?" - Ramaj

Ramaj is actually not surprised by this line of thought because there already has been serious discussion within the Empire about the likelihood of this very scenario.

The United Mankind is a country comprised of a coalition of various subordinate star systems. By gradually annexing more and more nations, they further increase their territories. This type of development is actually quite similar to how Abh Empire came to be. However, their greatest difference is that the United Mankind does not have one dominant race like the Abhs. Because of the Abh's personalities, they bear the responsibilities for the development of the nation. Therefore the Abh Empire has since the beginning been the core race and that has not changed since. However despite the United Mankind's fundamental unchanged policies at its core, it is flexible and tolerates how each country goes about implementing them.

If the United Mankind were to actually annex The People's Sovereign Stellar Union and Greater Alkont Republic, even though its core will likely see some changes in makeup, but will unlikely encounter any difficulties in internal integration.

However, if the newborn United Mankind were to, in-the-end, become a part of the Empire, then the Abh Empire can no longer ignore the situation of the Hania Federation any longer.

“Then your people should all be cheering on for a victorious Empire. Is my thinking correct?” - Ramaj

“Certainly, at the very least if we are talking about this war.” – Tin

“So what you are saying is that if we were to form an alliance, then it could bring the Empire to victory, correct ?” Ramaj said doing the best she can to suppress emotions from her tone, out of courtesy, otherwise it would be too obvious that she was mocking the Ambassador’s naivety. “Unfortunately Ambassador, we don’t have any tactics that involve working side-by-side with others. To fight alone, even in defeat would be better than to die alone with no-one to mourn for you.

This is the Empire, or rather; this is the Abh's reason for existance."

What Ramaj just said came straight from her heart, but she managed to hold back a part. In reality she never did consider revealing all their battle tactics to the Hania Federation based just on their alliance.

Even though their military's forces are sizable, their equipment is outdated to the point where even their command systems have problems. If confronted with an all-out war, the Hania Federation would probably have difficulties with just defenses alone. This is the current assessment from the intelligence.

Even if an alliance were stuck between the two nations , then the Empire would probably have to send part of their forces to help defend the Hania Federation: isn't this the very definition of to be bounded.

"No matter what, you need not trouble yourself." Ramaj already decided to end their conversation with the Ambassador with these words. "This war still has a long way to go. When that time does arrive, I hope that both

our nations could peacefully co-exist, but I fear that the person holding the position of Emperor then would no-longer be I."

"Is that so? Well, I do not expect this war to end before my life's passing, but from the perspective of my country , the end is already near."

"How about this," Ramaj asked feeling her patience at breaking point. "After the Empire's victory, the Hania Federation would become the only other race that can exert an influence in this galaxy. Is the Hania Federation prepared to confront the Empire? Or is the Hania Federation prepared to extend eternal friendship to the Empire? Or is the Hania Federation confident that it can defeat the Empire?"

"I think I may have crossed the line." The Ambassador said with a bitter smile, "it's like trapping an elephant and a mouse together in a cage: no one would even consider the possibility of peaceful co-existence between the two. Of course as the mouse, we could never attain the confidence of defeating the elephant."

"Then does your nation plan to extend eternal friendship to the Empire?" – Ramaj

"In a certain sense, yes." – Tin

"In a certain sense?" Ramaj for the first time became interested in what was being said, although that interest is still only a tiny sliver.

The mobile platform is at the halfway point. Ramaj directed the operator to decrease the mobile platform's speed. Even so, the mobile platform's original speed was already considered to be above average pace. Basically, the platform went from a light jogging pace to a normal walking pace, but in reality the difference is quite minor.

After the mobile platform has slowed down, Ramaj gestured with her eyes for the Ambassador to further explain himself.

Tin's expression all of a sudden became tense. "What I am about to tell you now, I have not informed the Prime Minister beforehand."

"So, you have something that you wish only I hear?" – Ramaj

"Correct." – Tin

"If the Prime Minister were to hear of this, I am sure he will not be pleased." – Ramaj

"I realize doing this may undermine the Prime Minister, but the matter at hand is quite grave." – Tin

"Oh?" Ramaj smiled, "If there are people with differing opinions within your alliance, then all the more reason for the Empire not to strike an alliance you."

"What I am about to propose will definitely have no negative impacts on an alliance between our countries. It' s just that if the citizens of my country were to learn of this, then I may be mistakenly labeled a traitor."

Ramaj stops smiling, "Even if it's an enemy, the Empire does not look kindly to traitors, much less to people from countries that are not of that status. Although I must admit that relations between our countries are not even that friendly, but hopes that we can maintain whatever positive relations we have between us. For us to accept a traitor would be an act of betrayal from the viewpoint of your country. This will undoubtedly tarnish our prestige and creditability. To

put it more clearly Ambassador, I don't think this alliance deal has any value to justify any cost from the Empire to acquire."

"This is why I said there could be misunderstandings. In addition, I believe the only reason that Your Majesty would think this way is because of your the deep emotional connection with 'country'. Provided, to accept a traitor is an act of betrayal, then the Empire has already committed this offense, more still is this was a recent event."

"I am unable to turn a blind eye towards this accusation; you don't truly believe that I have committed such a treacherous act before?" She said as the form of her mouth once again returned to a smile; a smile infamously known as the 'Abh's Smile'.

"It is this type of treacherous act that Your Majesty must undertake to bring about peace and prosperity." Tin firmly meets the Empress's gaze.

"I request that you clearly explain your words." Ramaj said with a stiff tone.

"The Hyde Country." The Ambassador said only these words.

'Oh? This is interesting.' Ramaj thought to herself; this time she is no-longer 'just interested'. She was already aware of what Tin's words were getting at as a wave of interest and dislike starts to interweave, stirring up a violent wave in her mind. "That is to say that your country plans to become a part of the Empire…"

"Your Majesty!" The Ambassador interrupted the Empress's sentence with astonishingly reckless bravery. " Provided that I have the fortune to accompany Your Majesty onboard the most famous ship in this galaxy the Gaftnosh, I will definitely explain everything I have said. "

A smile has once again been revived on Ramaj's face, but this time it's a warm smile even though it is but a tiny sliver of warmth.

"Very well. Ambassador, I shall accompany you back to the imperial palace. You should expect two others joining us on our passage." – Ramaj

"May I ask who these two are?" – Tin

"The Prime Minister and the Chief of Military Command." – Ramaj

"As you wish." Tin's face displays a smile of confident victory as he took a deep bow. The mobile platform came to a stop.

Upon leaving the imperial throne on the 'Gaftnosh', Ramaj has yet the luxury of even an ounce of rest as she heads down towards the Hall of Larkspur in the Imperial palace.

Normally, she would have enjoyed some solidarity on her way back, but the ambassador from the Hania Federation has happily snatched that joyous time away from her. However, she believes that her time spent with the ambassador is not without meaning.

"What do you think?" Ramaj asks as they have just stepped in the great hall.

Both the Prime Minister Burashu and Chief of Military Command Faramunshu have followed the Empress off of the Gaftnosh as they proceeded towards the palace.

"Although it sounds hard to believe, I think we can still trust him." Burashu says. "Originally, the Hania Federation's citizens lack interest in outer space, but when the population became too great for one system,

they had to look for other star systems to colonize. Although their ground worlds are very similar, or perhaps because of it, many of the planets are self-sufficient and the level of interplanetary exchange is surprisingly low. Even if in the next moments, they are completely cut off from planer space, each planet could quickly adapt. Perhaps they would not even feel the least bit inconvenience from it. I believe their only reason for uniting in the first place was to avoid absorption by the other nations."

"Is that so?" Ramaj asks as she nods.

Ramaj actually has little interest in the citizens of the federation; rather her only interest lies in their military strength. At most she would want to know a bit about their political organization, but regarding any other facet of the federation, she can care less about. After all, she is the empress of an empire and the commander-in-chief of the military; therefore she will leave the governance of the people in the hands of the feudal lords.

"In this sense," Burashu continued, "The ambassador's proposal would leave the problems of space to the

Empire, while they would happily live on their ground worlds. Ideally they would like to preserve some influence on matters of space."

"But we cannot allow that to occur." Ramaj replied casually.

"Your majesty is correct; therefore the ambassador's proposal is the next best thing from their view point. If they are to be annexed by some nation, it might as well be by the Empire because it's a good fit for them, and there is also a certain level of trust between the federation and the Empire."

So what the ambassador was discussing all along was actually for the Empire to annex the Hania Federation.

After all, if the federation is bound to be doomed, then at least they are more receptive to the Empire being their new ruler. But things are not always so pure and simple, even though the federation hopes to eventually let the Empire take care of matters in space and allow themselves to happily go about their lives on land.

In addition, the ambassador insisted this would not be submission, but rather "permeation" to describe the proposal's intentions.

In other words, from the view point of the Empire, the Hania Federation would be annexed. But from the view point of the Federation, an element of the Federation would permeate through the core of the Empire to become a part of the Human Empire by the Abh.

During the discussion, the Empire brought up a question: if the Empire were to be defeated, wouldn't this proposal worsen the Hania Federation's positions?

The ambassador feels that the end result would matter little. Even if the Hania Federation were to be 'liberated' by the Three Nation Alliance, the territories that sold themselves to the Empire will become territories of the alliance, and the central government that allowed it to happen would simply be dissolved.

What the officials of the Federation's central government demanded in return was surprisingly simple . First, following the precedent of Hyde country, for a few of their important star systems, the lord appointed must be a prominent person from the Federation. For the rest of the star systems with little importance, the Empire could appoint whomever it deem fit.

Secondly, the ambassador hopes that the Empire could provide a few uninhabited, but habitable planets not within the territory of the Federation. After all, there would be those in the Federation who sees the deal as betrayal, so the officials who would dissolve the Federation would want a place where they could live with their relatives and supporters without fear of retaliation.

Of course, if the Empire were to be destroyed in this war, then those officials who dissolve the Federation and their descendants would surely face severe punishment. But as stated, these people are all ready to face the risks and consequences of their actions.

Ramaj suddenly remembered the late Prime Minister. If it were he, surely he would not think of living in the same star system as with these people.

“What is your opinion on this commander?” Ramaj urged for his response.

“I believe we should reject this proposal.” Faramunshu responded in an expressionless tone.

“Explain your reasons.” Asked Ramaj

"The problem lays in the 'other condition' that we must split up our forces and defend the Hania Federation territories, or rather, the former Hania Federation's territories. Even before that, we must first send troops over to relieve their military of their duties. Quite frankly , we will be hard pressed to find enough ships to accomplish this in a timely fashion." - Faramunshu

The 'other condition' that Faramunshu spoke of is the demand that the Empire must defend the territories of the Hania Federation at all costs.

In comparison to the other conditions, this one is rather troublesome. After all, this will greatly restrict the Empire's military operations.

"So you believe it is not possible?" – Ramaj

"I cannot be sure." Faramunshu responded, "But your majesty must realize that this condition is difficult to implement. It is my hope that we can negotiate a more lenient agreement so that as long as the Empire is victorious in the end, then it should be doable."

"If this is so, do you believe we need to further negotiate?" – Ramaj

"No, I believe further negotiation is not necessary. In fact I am really in favor of the rest of the ambassador's proposal because if we can cut Hania Federation's motivation to go to war, then I believe we can spare enough ships to relieve their military of their duties." – Faramunshu

"How fast can this be accomplished?" – Ramaj

"If you can give three days of leave time to those at military command, this mission could be completed very fast. If the military strength of the Federation doesn't reach the point where they are necessary to be relieved, then they should get an addition week of leave."

"Looks like this is not so difficult after all." – This is Ramaj's assessment.

"If this is so, then we may move up the estimate end of the war." – Faramunshu

"How much faster can it be moved up?" – Ramaj

"Perhaps your majesty can see the conclusion of the war within your lifetime." – Faramunshu

"As the war to end all wars, this may seem like an excessively dull ending." – Ramaj

"Your majesty surely jests, to later generations; the only difference is only a figure. And if we were to see the end of this war, we can boast of our accomplishments to our children." – Faramunshu

"Don't tell me that you choose to skip over the excessively tragic events and just to boast of trivial victories?" – Ramaj

"Exactly, I will tell my children that before they were born, there was a beautiful and fascinating phenomenon called war." Faramunshu's tone seemingly joyous. "I can almost see the expression of endless remorse on the faces of our descendant."

"Perhaps our descendants will start their own wars out of envy." Ramaj said as she lightly laughed.

"As long as the Empire is not divided," Faramunshu suddenly said in a very serious tone, "This type of thing will definitely not occur."

"I believe that we cannot modify the defense condition without authorization." Burashu spoke, "It is true that from the Empire's perspective, even if a star system is occupied by enemy forces, as long as we are victorious in the end, then it matters little. However, for the people living on those planets, such things are not so simple."

"What you are saying is that the process is more important than the results for landers?" The commander asked but cannot help to express a frown on his face.

"No, not only that." Burashu explains, also dawning on a perplexed expression. "If the ruler of an area is under constant flux, then the society on the planet will be thrown into chaos and confusion, and will negatively impact the daily lives of those people. Indeed for the Hania Federation, what they care most about is the life of those people on those planets. They judge that the Empire is the nation most likely to defend their ground worlds. That is why they have courageously raised this proposal. They would not be willing to allow for any modifications to this requirement." Having said all this, the Prime Minister added in a low voice, "Those who are born on Lakfakalle sure are carefree about matters concerning landers."

"Well, your predecessor would sometimes say such things as well." Ramaj says.

"Being born of royalty, your tendencies towards it are probably more severe." Burashu said.

"Perhaps." Ramaj admits what the Prime Minister is correct.

In actuality, Ramaj has many worlds with inhabitants under her control. But as she dispatches officials to govern these worlds, she has actually never set foot on any of these planets and certainly never considered the well being of these people.

It is not that the Empress expresses any ill will towards them, she only feels that her familiarity with landers is but of a clean sheet of paper.

"In addition, we have never guaranteed that this condition is to be fully fulfilled." Burashu continues.

"The word of the Empress is not enough guarantee?" Ramaj asks as she raised an eyebrow.

"Please allow me to reiterate, the federation's trust in the Empire is rather high, and because of this, they have

the courage to put forth this proposals. In other words, your Majesty's words are more than enough for them."

"What are you trying to say?" Ramaj asks in confusion .

"Even though your majesty gave your word, in practicality it may be almost impossible to accomplish." Burashu comes out and directly say it.

"You would have me enter in an agreement that I know is impossible to fulfill?" A feeling of uneasy began to brood in Ramaj's chest.

Burashu felt what is bothering the Empress. With great degree of calm in his tone, he continued, "This way of doing things is very common among humans."

"Is that so?" Ramaj can't help but frown, because the uneasy she felt has yet to subside.

"In addition, this is the best way to decrease causalities ." Burashu looked over towards Faramunshu. "Does the commander have any better alternatives?"

"The Prime Minister is correct." Faramunshu has already brought his light grey braid from his shoulders

to his chest, only toying with his braid and exposing a mysterious smile.

"Even so, when we go to the Hania Federation capital to take over their territories, even if we engage in an elegantless battle to fulfill this unmodifiable condition, when the Empire is seemingly on the verge of defeat, they should realize that the agree upon terms are just goals we are striving to achieve and will not see it as a breach of agreement." – Burashu

"The Prime Minister sure has thought this out." Faramunshu says, "Of course, we must consider all possibilities. For example if the enemy were to forcibly invade, I cannot, after all, build a perfect defense system. Therefore, I believe what the Prime Minister has said has no further value in consideration. If the Federation expects us to be some all powerful god, then we would have to decline."

"No, actually the Hania Federation doesn't believe in an omnipotent god, in their religion…" Burashu originally thought he should continue, but he decided not to. "Anyways, this subject is trivial. Please ask the commander. Do you have any more hesitations? I feel that the commander is pursuing a dead end."

"There is still the difference between withdrawing from a system if the defense fails and abandoning the battle at the outset. I hope to keep the freedom to abandon a sord if necessary." The commander clarifies. " If we were to follow the terms of this condition, as long as it is an inhabited system, then we must dispatch ships to defend it even if they are undefendable to begin with and have little or no value to the Empire. This is no different than us offering the enemy hostages on a silver platter."

"I believe this is just a matter of interpretation." – Burashu

"Although what you have proposed is indeed logical and sound, but this is still very much a deception, worse, we are aware of this fact." – Faramunshu

"However, if this were to allow the war to end earlier, then we have nothing to be ashamed about. Although I respect your values commander, but I believe that minimizing our losses on the battlefield should far outweigh those values." – Burashu

"Besides," Faramunshu retorts in an unrushed manner , "Was it not you that brought up the fact that frequent changes in rulers will be troublesome to people on land?"

"That is only because you asked why the ambassador would not yield to modification of this condition. If we are to look at this from our viewpoint, then we would not even have considered this. In order to protect their comfort, we must send many of our soldiers to their deaths, which are seemingly a senseless sacrifice." – Burashu

"Enough," Ramaj interrupts their debate. "Whether the Empire should or should be become deceivers are not yours to debate, you are overstepping your authority."

Both of them simultaneously lowered their heads.

Ramaj continues, "But remember, Prime Minister, there is one thing you must keep in mind: when the time comes that I were to take over their territories, I must respond to the ambassador's conditions. In other words, if we were to use your methods, we would have affirmed ourselves to the United Mankind that the Abh Empress has indeed lied on purpose. You should know that in the past the Empire has profited greatly from people's

knowledge that the Emperor does not lie. It is why the ambassador has even come forth with this proposal. But with just one lie, all that trust will collapse. Thereafter, every person that has to sit upon this throne will have to make huge efforts to gain the trust of others or else they would not be able to govern. This will also make the accumulated reputation that our ancestors whom have worked so hard to achieve disappear, and collapse the confidence of the abilities of the Ablïarsec to rule."

"Of course when the Empire no-longer has any enemies, this indeed is of great harm to the reputation of the clan." Burashu says as he slightly raised his head, " Your Majesty, I hope in the end you are still not concerned with whether or not you can still protect the honor of the Ablïarsec."

"That is also within my strategic consideration." – Ramaj

Burashu bowed deeply to the Empress as if to say that he will no longer debate this issue.

"For now we will not discuss whether or not we should accept this condition. What is the feasibility of relieving their military?" Ramaj asks Faramunshu.

"I am afraid I do not have an answer at the moment." – Faramunshu

"Could it be that military command has not looked into this?" Ramaj asks in a harsh tone.

One of the duties of military command is to plan for contingencies for a number of different scenarios. Under the ideal circumstance, even if something that cannot happen occurred, the Empire would have a plan to deal with it. Even though the Hania Federation surrendering without resistance was difficult to anticipate, it was not impossible to predict.

The Empress can't help but feel that the military command lacked diligence to have not planned and prepared for this.

"Your Majesty's criticisms are correct." Faramunshu said without making any excuses.

"Whatever, it is after all war time; your department is also very busy." – Ramaj

"I'm afraid so." – Faramunshu

"Looks like rejecting the proposal is the best course." Ramaj said casually.

"However, if we do that then the Hania Federation could join the enemy and enter the war." Burashu says, " After all, the opinion of the ambassador is not unanimously shared in the federation."

Ramaj knows well that Tin Kuihan's views are not shared by the majority of the federation. There is another element inside the federation that strongly supports entering the war. According to them, they are striving for an advantageous position for when the war is over, and at present time, they feel that the federation must be the Empire's enemy. Victory is preferred, but if defeated, at most the federation is dissolved. To this end, both their positions are identical, however, they over looked one critical factor: all the numerous people that may die due to their decision.

If the Empire ultimately rejects annexing the Hania Federation, then the war supporters will undoubtedly gain a great amount of influence.

"The Empire is at a difficult fork in the road." Burashu reinforces his point, "And the question remains, this fork

in the road is created by the inconsistent views held by the federation."

"Even if the Empire were to annex the federation, wouldn't they be likely forced to go to war?" Ramaj asked.

"In reality, both paths are quite troublesome." Burashu replied.

"That I understand." – Ramaj

"However," Faramunshu begins to speak, "Perhaps allowing the federation to join the war, from our perspective, will be simpler for our military operations. Although we won't have to debate about the 'other condition', but consider the disadvantageous rigidness of defending their ground worlds, then perhaps allowing them to become the enemies of the Empire may be less burdensome."

"Have you not looked into this point as well?" – Ramaj

"Because protecting anything other than Lakfakalle is outside the scope of anything we have previously anticipated we have not. Of course if your majesty approves, we would look into it right away."

Ramaj was somewhat taken aback by the commander's reply, "Why would you need my approval?"

"If we were to only occupy the territories of the Hania Federation then that would be fine, but to defend it at all costs, then this idea will definitely never come from within the Empire. In other words, my department cannot be aware of proposals that come from outside the Empire. Even if I were to say this idea came upon me during a drunken stupor and forced them to look into this option they will, but not everyone would be so easily fooled, much less that they strictly follow the rules. Even if they were to act like they were being fooled, it would still be quite difficult. Even if I were to tell them this was a proposal from the federation, the results would be the same. Of course I know that there should be no one in my department that would knowingly leak military secrets, but without your majesty's approval, I would still avoid telling those under me of this proposal."

"Those under your command are also under my command, and I also believe there are none who would leak military secrets, so you should quickly begin your research." – Ramaj

"Yes ma'am." Faramunshu bowed deeply towards the Empress.

"Then, if we reject their proposal and should they enter into the war, you at least should have looked into their combat capabilities right?" – Ramaj

"Of course, although I sometimes wonder if I am too lenient with my subordinates, fortunately, their work ethic is endlessly diligent." – Faramunshu

"But I have never heard from others that you are a commander who is lenient towards your subordinates." – Ramaj

"That is because I would use every method at my disposal to make sure your majesty would not catch wind of my true colors." – Faramunshu

"Whatever you say." Ramaj prepares to make her verdict.

Regard the matter with annexing the Hania Federation , there are still many factors and variables that are uncertain and right now the Empire simply does not have the luxury of risking uncertainties.

"I believe we should still accept the proposal." Burashu decides to voice his objection.

'Could it be that he plans to take this debate back to square one?' Ramaj warns herself. Although she appreciates the efforts of the Prime Minister, but if Burashu proves to be one with little ability, then him being replace would not be out of the question.

"What are your reasons?" Ramaj says

"Your majesty please factor in the consideration of the impact of the citizens on those planets. If the Hania Federation were to surrender without a fight, then this event might be a shock for the citizens of our current enemies."

"How is this different?" Ramaj asks tilting her head.

"This may sap the will of the citizens from other enemy nations and they may surrender star system by star system to the Empire." – Burashu

"I don't see any difference." – Ramaj

Traditionally, the Empire can care less about whether landers prefer to surrender or go to war because the main enemy for Star Fleet has always been another enemy fleet. So even if the government of a star system surrenders, this may not be any particular advantage.

In addition, it would be disadvantageous in the short term because the Empire would have to protect the planet from economic collapse, and from the viewpoint of the Empire, to garrison troops there would pose a burden on the flexibility to wage combat.

“However, at least when the empire takes over a system the transition of governance is usually a smooth one. In addition, I believe The People's Sovereign Stellar Union and the Greater Alkont Republic may follow the Hania Federation’s footsteps.” – Burashu

“Wouldn’t star systems only submit if the enemy’s faith in the word of the Emperor still remained intact?” – Ramaj

“Your majesty is correct. In my opinion, even if your majesty promises to keep your word to the last letter, we should still accept the proposal.” – Burashu

"I will not dispatch the military based on mere speculation." Ramaj said dramatically, "I hope you can bring me number to back up what you are saying."

"Indeed." Burashu declared, "I will calculate the probability, that once the Hania Federation is annexed by the Empire, how likely the Three Nation Alliance are willing to surrender without a fight and how many individual planets are likely to surrender without a fight. In addition, I will also calculate the time necessary for the these newly surrendered planets to be integrated into the Empire's economy. After we have figured out the estimates for the things mentioned above, we can clearly estimate how long this war will last."

Faramunshu gazed deeply at Burashu.

After the Prime Minister gave the commander a quick glance, he continues, "Of course, I will do everything within my ability to keep this a secret."

"I'll leave it to you." Ramaj nodded, "I will withhold my decision for now. Both of you should present your findings as soon as you can."

"I will do my best."

"Yes your majesty."

Both Burashu and Faramunshu salute the Empress.

Chapter 4: Stronghold

"Incoming inter-bubble transmission from the flagship ." Yateshu raised his voice on the bridge.

"What does it say?" Lafiel asked in his direction.

"All stop and go on standby. Over." – Yateshu

"Reply with a confirmation signal. Navigator, put our time-space bubble on standby." Lafiel ordered.

Lafiel looked at the planer space map. Currently, the 1st Scourge squadron has all stopped in a line. Numerous time-space bubbles pass by the 1st Scourge squadron and proceeded forward. They are the guard ship squadron that was on reserve and how heads to protect the fleet. Next, there seems like some other ships that broke away from their squadron to join these ships that are proceeding forward.

The Twin Thorne 24th fleet currently is sending waves and waves of attacks toward the Kemal Sord. Although the battle is so intense that it cannot be described by words, it looks like the battle is now finally making progress.

The enemy's artillery barrage has started to become sparse. This is evidence that the enemy's consumption of time-space mines is finally outstripping production.

But this could also be a deception tacit by the enemy. In other words, the enemy could still be sitting on many more mines but is deliberately cutting down on their use. This looks like it could be a trap.

Even so, this is not something that Lafiel should concern herself with. Although she has the potential to eventually sit on the throne one day, she is never-the-less just the captain of a ship for now. For a person in her position, giving their life for their duty is their greatest joy.

Indeed, the duty to decipher the enemy's strategy is left to HQ and HQ has decided that the enemy is not concealing their full capabilities.

This last time, the artillery barrage was extremely sparse and the Flicaubh fused with only three mines. Not only that, they expecting to encounter no enemy warships ahead and the only thing left to greet the Star Force are long range autonomous mines.

It was the same with the wave before that, and the enemy hasn't sent any additional ships in to planer space . However, the Kemal star system not only has a mine factory, but also a huge shipbuilding workshop so their production capabilities should not be underestimated. Since the Twin Thrones operation has yet to engage in any large scale battles, the enemy vessels that were destroyed should be easily replenished. But even though the vessels could be constructed in a short time, their crew would not be so easily replenishable. In other words, the military force of the enemy should be greatly decreased.

If this is so, then our best strategy is to let them wear themselves out in normal space. However, even these things are not required for Lafiel to worry about. For as soon as the enemies show their face, she will attack head on: her duties are just this simple.

In short, her current task is to guard the guard ship squadron: a dull and mundane task.

In addition, Lafiel has yet the opportunity to display her abilities because the enemy fleet just won't come out.

"Incoming inter-bubble transmission. All ships will go into active mode and follow the guard ship squadron at a distance."

Upon hearing what Yateshu reported Lafiel nodded and immediately issued the relevant orders.

A long and boring trip is about to begin.

When the guard ship squadron reached the edges of the sord, the commander again sent out orders to stop again.

It is finally time for the ship-of-the-line squadron to appear on the frontlines. Fully loaded with anti-matter mines, they are ready to fire them into the sord attacking the enemies inside. But even after this wave of attack has ended, the assault frigates and the cruisers still will not go into combat.

Another squad of ship-of-the-line seems to be going through the gate one by one. These ship-of-the-line do not carry anti-matter mines but instead anti-matter missiles. These missiles are designed for normal space and pack just as much of a punch as the mines. However, since they do not have the time-space bubble generator,

they are quite a bit smaller. So each ship can carry much more anti-matter missiles than they can with mines.

Lafiel wonders if HQ sending these vulnerable ship-of-the-lines up to the front is really the best option. Although her heart feels unsettled, all she can do is quietly watch from the sidelines as they charge into the Kemal Sord.

Command finally issued orders for the cruisers and assault squadrons to proceed.

“Distance to the Kemal Sord: 5 minutes.”

“Attention, this is your captain.” Lafiel spoke on the ship-wide intercom, “This ship will enter normal space soon, and we can expect an intense battle ahead. Everyone be well prepared.”

Next, she orders the engines to max and do a final check on weapons. Other officers are reporting in one-by-one of nothing abnormal and it looks like this assault frigate is done with final combat preparations.

“One minute until we enter the sord” Ekuryua said.

“Start the countdown at 30 seconds.” – Lafiel

The countdown began shortly.

"…25, 24, 23…" Ekuryua's calm voice fills the bridge. The nervousness of the crew members amidst the quietness is rising steadily.

Lafiel concentrates her attention on her spatial sensor device.

"…5, 4, 3, 2, 1, passing through." – Ekuryua

The area grasped by her spatial sense rapidly expands, as if the world had suddenly expanded infinitely in all directions. This made Lafiel feel a sense of giddiness, in fact, every time that Lafiel has exited planer space to normal space, she has felt this and does not dislike it.

But now is not the time to focus on such sensations.

Her previous worries are confirmed because the current battlefield situation is very bad.

Given that Point A is the gate and Point B is a location in planer space, then those two points would not have

any relationship regarding their positions. In other words , when a ship exits a sord, they cannot predict where that ship will exit from.

Of course, even if a squadron tightly charges into a sord, unless you are extremely lucky, you will not be with your squadron when you arrive and will still be scattered about when they exit.

On the other hand, the defensive side can arrange its fleet in an orderly manner beforehand, and can position their mobile space fortress. For them, this is closer to a hunt than a battle and perhaps it is more interesting to think of it this way.

Although the mines and missiles fired from the ship-of-the-line will have certain impact, this doesn't mean that the battle will be in Star Force's favor.

Originally, Lafiel wanted to head for the fleet rally point, but she suddenly realized right now is not the time because there are tens of unknown projectiles flying their way, and most likely they are nuclear fusion warheads fired from electromagnetic cannons.

"Evade!" Lafiel shouted.

Movement occurred in Arubofu's control interface attached to his left hand.

Although he did not respond, Lafiel would not fault her Gunnery Officer for it. She only gave the crew this warning: "All hands, prepare for sudden acceleration!"

At the same time, the jets on the starboard (right) side of the Flicaubh suddenly fires and the assault frigate begin to drift sideways. The lasers on the ship also begin to fire upon these projectiles sent by the enemy.

A huge blast occurred near the ship and the shockwave shook the Flicaubh.

Although Lafiel has avoided the first wave of attacks, but she has still yet to take a breath.

"Three enemy vessels have fired unknown objects at our ship!" Yateshu reported.

Lafiel is still attempting to grasp the current battlefield conditions.

Looks like the ship-of-the-lines that went in first did indeed get excellent results, but their losses have been also quite severe.

The battlefield is further complicated by the wreckage of warships from both sides and clusters of antimatter which have not yet diffused.

Lafiel lightly closed her eyes and concentrate on her spatial sensors. Among the wreckage and debris, she found a route to the rally point. However she is unsure whether she should proceed to the rally point or should she stay and fight off these three ships that are rapidly approaching the assault frigate?

Those three ships looks like are all defense ships which just mean that they do not have space-time generators and are purely for normal space combat. Although most interstellar armies have all but ceased making these defense ships, these ships are actually a defining characteristic for the army of The People's Sovereign Stellar Union. This is a difference between the Abh, whose knowledge is of planar space as the main battlefield and who did not adhere to the defense of star systems, and the Union who considered ground worlds to be their whole focus.

Moreover, these three ships are heavy defense ships equipped with electromagnetic cannons. Their armament is almost equal to that of an assault frigate, but because

they don't have space-time bubble generating engines, their mobility is higher. After all, this is normal space and a time-space generator for any ship is no more useful than a useless limb.

Although it would hurt Lafiel's pride a bit, she knows that she has little chance in a three-versus-one fight. But even if the Flicaubh were to head straight for the rally point, they may still not outrun the electromagnet cannons of the enemy.

There is no more time to further consider her options as everyone on the ship is waiting for Lafiel's orders.

"Arubofu," Lafiel finally issues her orders, "Turn and fire once upon the enemy vessels, the target is up to you, afterwards, make straight for the rally point."

"Understood." – Arubofu

Both the primary engines and the side jets began to roar as the Flicaubh began to gradually face the enemy vessel. Although the ship cannot make a complete stop will certainly leave then gunner unsatisfied, Arubofu still pull the trigger to fire the electromagnetic cannons.

The assault frigate fires a salvo of nuclear fusion warheads from its electromagnetic cannons.

The enemy ships have already launched their second wave of attacks, but Arubofu was still able to masterfully control the Flicaubh to dodge their incoming attacks.

In order to evade the Flicaubh attacks, the three enemy vessels scattered. Ceasing this opportunity, the Flicaubh made their way pass the enemy ships and at maximum speed headed straight for the rally point.

“What is the status on communicating with flagship?” – Lafiel

“Currently, the signal is extremely poor and unsteady. ” Yateshu reports.

“Can we make a connection?” – Lafiel

Even if they can’t get a direct uplink, they could still communicate to the flagship via audio only. Although there may be some noise from interference, Lafiel’s ears would not mind such inconveniences.

“I will try my best.” – Yateshu

The rally point changes moment by moment. If there is no command ship for direct uplink, then you would be as lost as a child in a department store. But if we were to look for the flagship amongst the countless number of ships around, with spatial sensors alone, it was be nearly impossible. The spatial sensors are limited in their capabilities in this respect. The on-board sensors can also be restricted due to interference and is also nearly incapacitated. Lafiel has seemingly been thrown in a thick fog, even though objects near can be discerned with clarity, anything beyond is impossible to grasp.

The enemy vessels have already nearly caught up.

"Make acceleration the top priority." Lafiel said to Arubofu.

"Do I have permission to fire the rear electromagnetic cannons?" – Arubofu

If the two rear electromagnetic cannons were to fire, then it will somewhat negatively impact the acceleration of the ship.

"You have permission." However, Lafiel still gave the gunnery officer permission.

Looks like even Arubofu cannot tolerate the embarrassment of escape. But in any case, this assault frigate cannot just single-mindedly escape without preparing for a fight. This is, after all, a battlefield and increasing their speed merely meant that they are leading the enemy to their own demise.

Arubofu quickly fires the rear electromagnetic cannons as the enemy fires as well. Both volleys pass by and missed each other. At the same time, the jets on the starboard (right) side of the ship roared to maximum. The enemy warhead shot right past the flames of the jets, and Gunomuboshu concentrated all lasers upon it.

Lafiel senses the rally point. However, none of the warship silhouettes resembles that of the flagship. Or perhaps there are just too many objects and she cannot even decipher which one is the flagship.

“Incoming communications signal!” Yateshu shouted.

Lafiel at the same time loosens her frown.

“This is command.” Although there is only audio the quality was rather clear.

"Commander," Lafiel straightens her back and salutes to the blank screen with no video. Just because she cannot see the video feed from command, it doesn't mean her every move cannot be seen by them. Furthermore, she doesn't want her subordinates think that she is officer with low discipline, "Please to see that you are alive as ever."

"If you did not come as you did, then I might not be here anymore." Atosuryua said, "Because the uplink is still having difficulties, I will send over the navigation data."

"Yateshu?" – Lafiel

"The data has been received." – Yateshu

After Lafiel nodded towards the communications officer, she reported to Atosuryua, "We have received the data."

"Great, I was afraid I had to relay all that verbally." – Atosuryua

"The feeling is mutual." Lafiel was afraid of the same thing.

"Currently my squadron will proceed to escort the ship-of-the-line back to planer space. You are to proceed to the rally point. If your communication were to be severed, the data I have given you should lead you to the flagship."

"Thank you for your assistance." – Lafiel

Arubofu quickly entered in the coordinates for their destination and continued at high speeds.

Lafiel once again closed her eyes to concentrate on her spatial sensors. As long as they don't encounter any issues, they should arrive in about 25 minutes.

Of course, it is almost impossible not to be met with any issues along the way. First, the three enemy ships are still pursing like admirers, and in addition, several groups of enemy vessels have also taken a great interest in the Flicaubh.

To Lafiel, their current situation has not improved by much. The only thing that can still be considered good news is that the fleet is still dispatching more ships through the gate.

"Arubofu, " Lafiel begins to issue new orders, "Can we fly near the sord?"

"Are you daring me to?" The gunnery officer asked as he raised an eyebrow.

"Is that what you think?" – Lafiel

"This depends on how near to the sord you want me fly." – Arubofu

"1,000 wesdaj away." – Lafiel

"This undoubtedly is a dare." Arubofu said calmly.

"Are you up to the challenge?" – Lafiel

"Not quite." – Arubofu

"Then get to it." Lafiel exposes a smile. " Gunomuboshu, I have a new task for you."

"Yes ma'am!" although unnecessary the line wing flyer still stood up from his seat while responding.

"Keep an eye on the surface of the sord so you don't miss any signs of exiting bubbles." – Lafiel

"I understand!" – Gunomuboshu

"We are counting on you, rookie." Arubofu also added .

When the surface of a sord bubbles, it's a sign that something is descending to normal space, in this case it would most likely be a Star Force warship. Although Lafiel is aware of the fact that at any moment she may lose her life on the battlefield, but if it's caused by collision with a friendly ship, she would be embarrassed to have her name carved on a stone monument in the Hall of Loss.

However, for the enemy this is a very dangerous location because their chances of being attacked are raised. Even if the attack came from a weak blast of laser fire, at close range, it can still cause serious damage.

From the beginning of when warfare began among humans, friendly fire has always been a byproduct of the battlefield. However, military technology today has advanced to the point that the risk of friendly fire has almost been eliminated.

Therefore from the viewpoint of the enemy, if they were to fly close to the sord, they must bear the

additional risk of the unknown. To Lafiel, this is of some benefit, but is still of little comfort.

As Lafiel has predicted, the enemy ships are keeping their distance from the sord. Lafiel is happy to meet such sensible enemies. But this also means that she no longer has any more luxury to allow her thoughts to wonder. If she did, then she would have been in great disdain for the enemy's monotony.

By doing this, Arubofu only has to worry about what is in front of him, which are just ships about to exit the sord. At the same time, Flicaubh's movements are also greatly restricted: to approach the sord any further would also be very risky. To leave the sord too far and they would once again lose the advantageous position they have so far. For now, Lafiel can only limit their movements to the boundary between the two spaces.

'Is this really the correct strategy' thought to herself as doubt begins to grow in the heart of Lafiel.

Although Lafiel knows that she should not expose her doubt, but even for her current self to control her expressions is still rather difficult.

Suddenly, her clyuno rings and it's from Jinto.

"How is it?" – Jinto

"Great." Due to the low volumes, Lafiel had to put the clyuno up to her ear.

"Your expression right now is as if you have the insight of the entire universe." – Jinto

"Idiot, don't be making fun of me at these kinds of times." – Lafiel

"Sorry." Jinto responded filled with quiet laughter as he ended the connection.

Just when Lafiel went back to concentrating, she noticed that Ekuryua looking subtly at her. Although Lafiel believes that her XO's face is always expressionless , even up until now it has always remained the same, but she noticed that Ekuryua's expressionless face may actually be divided into several types. Or it could be said that Ekuryua's expressionless face is actually just a thin outer layer for others to see, and this mask may disappear for but a moment and then go back to being expressionless again.

'Has she seen through me as well?' Lafiel asked herself as she relaxes her eyebrows.

Perhaps she is lucky, for besides these two, the rest of the crew has yet to notice what Lafiel was feeling. The assault frigate is wobbling left and right as it glides along the sord surface as they are fast approaching the rendezvous coordinates. Lafiel's spatial sensor has clearly picked up the location of the flagship as well.

"An uplink has been established!"

"Really?" Lafiel nodded.

A large amount of information is pouring into the assault frigate. Lafiel is using her spatial sensors to determine the position the ship is to take up and glancing at an update of the progress of the battle.

"Execute the orders from the flagship immediately!" – Lafiel

"Gunomuboshu, you are relieved of your previous tasks and continue to monitor the mobile laser cannons."

The enemy ships numbers six. Including the Flicaubh, there is already eight assault frigates gathered. In addition, while gathering the ships, the flagship has ordered them to take up a surrounding formation.

It looks like the ship-of-the-lines has already successfully made it through the sord and the once confused fleet is starting to get organized.

“Welcome Flicaubh.” Atosuryua’s image finally is displayed on the screen.

“Immediately adjust our position.” – Lafiel

“Understood.” Arubofu replied as Lafiel looks upon him.

Because there had been a slight shift between the position now directed by the flagship and the position received prior to the information connection, a correction is needed.

They finally arrive at the best place for firing upon the enemy warships.

“All ships, open fire!” Atosuryua’s orders quickly came.

“Fire!” Lafiel also orders.

The electromagnetic cannons fires their nuclear fusion warheads as the main engines were set to max. Lasers from the mobile cannon banks of an enemy warship sweep the bow of the Flicaubh.

An oncoming enemy warship explodes, becoming countless fragments. These fragments are then sucked in by the gravitational pull of the star, heading towards the Flicaubh. Even the magnetic defense shields isn't able to deflect the fragments, which are made of normal matter.

The debris caused damage to the outer hull. A shadow of a ship broke through the anti-matter cloud spewed by the destroyed ship and heading towards the Flicaubh, but the ship is actually an ally ship: the Kerukovu and the two ships pass by each other.

When the eight ships of the 1st Scourge Squadron have finished the combined attack, the enemy warships had

been halved. As far as Lafiel's spatial sensors can tell, their side had not lost a ship. At this time, the enemy warships seem to be planning to withdraw from combat.

"Give me a damage report." Lafiel ordered.

"Three of the lasers are damaged." Gurinshia reported, "Our ship has not suffered any critical damage."

Lafiel carefully looks at her control panel to check on the statue of the other seven ships and it looks like they are all ok.

'Are we to pursue to enemy?' Lafiel thought as she awaits further orders.

"Attention all 1st Scourge Squadron ships." Atosuryua 's voice appeared, "We are to stay put and maintain control of the area around the sord. The enemy has lost the will to fight and we are to standby until further orders are issued to us."

Lafiel takes a deep breath. Looks like she survived this time as well.

Chapter 5: Imperial Order

"Number one space-time fusion (Gor Putarloth), enemy 907 destroyed. Number two space-time fusion, enemy 632 destroyed. Number six and seven space-time fusion ....." a stream of monotonous reports from the communication officer (Drokia) echoes through the bridge (Gahorl) of the battleship of the line (Alaicec) ‘ Kaisof’.

On this warship, the current reporting communication officer was Duhir.
While Duhir observed the space-time bubbles (Flasath) fusing on the plane-space projection map (Ja Fad) he was busy using his tongue.

"Number eleven space-time fusion (Gor Putarloth). There is no change to enemy 915. Oh, it's destroyed now. Number twelve space-time fusion, enemy 336....."

"Very well," Hecto-Commander (Bomowas) Bersot began .

"Quite so." Kazuvu joined in.

Duhir was silent.

Mines (Hoksath) destroy enemies and disperse them as space-time particle (Supflasath) ripples going through plane-space (Fath). The majority of enemies are also mines.
But it is consoling to know that friends are being avoided .

"Is there something out of order?" Bersot asked.

If the Captain (Salerl) asks something then it has to be answered.
The flight officer (Lodair) on the bridge reported no abnormalities at his station.

"Very well. Ready the next wave of mines. Have we received any target yet?"

Usually, a battleship of the line cannot choose its target. Squadron headquarters will determine the targets beforehand, and the ship just fires according to the instructions.

Senior communications officer (Alm Drokia) Vonyu

answered, "Not yet."

"What is the senior officer doing? Can't we occasionally fire at will?"

"Please do not say 'cannot do it' just because everybody expects something else," lectured Vonyu.
"Target has been transmitted by the flagship (Glaga)."

"Is that so? Enter target information!" Bersot ordered casually disappointed.

"Target information entered." said Kazuvu.

"Commence space-time separation (Gor Lyutcoth)!"

"Space-time separation (Gor Lyutcoth), aye."

Mines (Hoksath) have been fired beforehand and placed stationary within the space-time bubble (Flasath) of the ‘ Kaisof’.
Now, the order was given and one after another began space-time separation (Gor Lyutcoth).

"Number 21 space-time separation (Gor Lyutcoth), number 22nd, space-time separation." Duhir read it aloud while the 'Kaisof' shot all munitions until exhaustion as time went by.

Duhir returns to gaze once again at the plane-space projection map (Ja Fad).
Mines (Hoksath) were shot from each ship of the Strike Half-Fleet 'Guderusu' toward the enemy Fleet. Patrol warships (Résic) deployed at the front along with assault ships (Gairh) waited a moment before moving out. They mixed into the group of mines (Hoksath) in the attack. Mines (Hoksath) were also released from the enemy Fleet .
Space-time bubbles (Flasath) are shown to be merging.

"Number 24, space-time fusion (Gor Putarloth), enemy 117 destroyed. Number 25, space-time fusion, there is no change to enemy 532. Number 26, space-time fusion ....." Duhir read off the battle results without excitement.

Mines (Hoksath) destroy each other creating a big tide within plane-space (Fath) while the patrol warship and assault ship kept pushing forward. Eventually, all mines (Hoksath) are destroyed.

"Retreat signal from squadron flagship (Glaga Sov)." reported Vonyu.

Duhir glanced at the plane-space projection map (Ja Fad). The squadron flagship already started to withdraw.

"All stop, that's it for today," Bersot stretches himself, " Full movement state (Noktaf), course 95. Follow the squadron flagship (Glaga Sov)."

"Are we leaving the battlefield just like that?" Duhir blurbed out carelessly.

"Do you think a battleship of the line (Alaicec) without mines (Hoksath) has a chance?" Bersot asks surprisingly gently.

"No." replied Duhir.

A fierce battle continues far at the front.
However, a battleship of the line with its big body is only a decoy in such a battlefield.
And the Star Force (Laburéc) was not desperate yet to have to use them as decoy.

However you might think the order is right.
Above all, since an order was given by the squadron flagship, the Captain (Salerl) has no choice.
However, Bersot's joyful voice felt inappropriate.
Duhir felt ashamed. He seemed to have accused unjustly.
For a person having the family name (Fiith) Abriel it has been taught to be careful when criticizing his superiors.
There is reason to believe his superior may take it wrongly because it comes from a member of the Imperial family (Fasanzoerl).
Bersot was not his only worry, Duhir thought.

"His Highness the Prince (Feia Larsol) is dissatisfied," Bersot went on while smiling.

Duhir was not able to come to like his smile.

"That is not the case." he denied.

Bersot expressed bluntly his unbelief under the circumstances "That's so dishonest."

"I'm not dishonest." Duhir denied.

"It's becoming to deny the Captain's (Salerl) every word," Bersot said smiling wryly.

"I'm really sorry."

The Captain does not seem to be so unpleasant.

"Look, Line Wing Officer (Fektodai) Abriel," called the Captain in order to be effective, "this is good as this makes you a special person."

"Yes," Duhir accepted it plainly.

The Imperial family (Fasanzoerl) is at least one of a kind in the Empire (Frybar).
He did not depend on his birthright, but no matter what he cannot show a behavior of opposing the order of the armed forces or denying his right to the Royal Throne.
The important thing is to think that you are a talented person.
The Star Forces (Laburéc) does not regard hiding one's talent to be a virtue.

"In fact," Bersot said proudly, "we who are assigned to you are special."

"No," said Duhir reflexively.
"I was posted under the Captain (Salerl) not the other way around."

"According to procedure it is," asserted Bersot matter of fact.

"It is truly so." Duhir added immediately.

"Is it so?" Bersot's confidence became uncertain.

"I think." replied Duhir feeling his confidence fading away.

"What does it matter?" Vonyu inserted.

"Whether or not you are special is not important to you?" Bersot asked mysteriously.

"Everyone is unique, don't you think so?" Vonyu replied and as if to end it, "There is no need to assert this every time."

"You are avoiding the topic."

"That is not my intention, but," said Vonyu unexpectedly. "what you called special is related to human individualism. It can also be found in me as with every other Abh. Indeed what refers to 'special', or whatever you call it, relates itself to the Empire's position in the matter. Simply speaking ....."
"In other words the Captain (Salerl) is interested if you will have an outstanding career" summarized Vonyu her conclusion.

With a look of a well-mannered cat Bersot asked, "Are you not interested in an outstanding career?"

"I could be," Vonyu asserted flatly.
"As the Empire (Frybar) is at war this is my duty as a landed gentry (Ryuuk). Being aboard a warship (Wakreurl) can be fun in this world."

"That is obvious……" Bersot said woefully, "however, don't you want to at least set some goal for yourself?"

"I didn't think about who I kill whom I have never met before." replied Vonyu ill-humored.

Bersot dumb founded by the statement said. "The way

you say it is very blunt……"

"That is the nature of war."

"I don't think someone who is not a field army officer (Bosnal) can lecture me about war."

"I have no intention to lecture" he stated furthering his line.
“Further even if the army officer (Bosnal) starts thinking about the meaning of the war, I don't think that it has any influence.
Anyway……" Vonyu cuts off.
"What is it?"

"It's alright. It would have been an impolite speech to the senior officer."

"Brilliant turn around."

"In fact the dream of becoming a squadron commander (Lesh Sov) is a lofty aspiration for a small man." Vonyu whispered.

But it was enough to reach Bersot's ear.

"This may not be the dream. I mean it is 'the least' rank I hope to serve with. It certainly comes true if I do not die. It is not a dream."

"Please do not think aloud. And……" Vonyu suddently gazes directly at Duhir.
Conscious of it, rather than looking involuntarily turns her eyes away in a hurry.

"Well, so it is" Bersot stared at Duhir without concern and smiled mischievously.
"It is wrong to talk about a career in front of the boy who may sit down on the Jade Imperial Throne (Skemsorl Roen)"

Imperial throne (Skemsorl)…….
It would be a lie to say that he would not have thought about it.
Whenever he thought of the Alpha (almfac) with Gaftonosh (Gaftonosh) which is a symbol of the Emperor (Spunej) he inevitably sees his older sister Lafiel connected to them.
He cannot imagine her accepting any gratitude from her subjects.
Lafiel is not the first female candidate for the next

Empress.
There are some people who are nearer to the Royal Throne than him in the eight royal families (Lartei Ga).

Besides, there was no clear intention to want to become Emperor (Spunej).
The Kryb King (Larth Crÿub) Dubeusec who is his father was meant for it at one time —— being born into the Imperial family (Fasanzoerl) has various obligations. However, to become Emperor (Spunej) is not included. After all, a lot of candidates are prepared even if he says anything.
When he heard the words, Duhir did not feel any emotion in particular.
He knew it.
He thought he understood it after this long, but he is still insecure.
But, now, living among the people with whom the Imperial family (Fasanzoerl) has little contact with made him realize the weight of the words of his kingly father.
The people seem always to expect someone from the Imperial family to become Emperor (Spunej) even if you are not.
Even if there is nobody saying it out loud, he feels the strong pressure as if going for the Imperial throne is his

duty.
Duhir fell silent.
It was not required to talk about his feelings which he felt was relieving.

"Captain (Salerl)" it was Vonyu who held his Alpha (Almfac) lightly down to the eyebrows.

"A message?" asked Bersot.

"Yes, please wait." Vonyu concentrated on her spatial-sensor organ (Frosh).

"Is the message from that space-time bubble (Flasath)?" Bersot asked pointing his command stick (Greu) at the plane-space projection map (Ja Fad).

There was a space-time bubble of a friend. The space-time bubble of a communications ship.
It was not strange that a communications ship (Longia) was in the battlefield at all, but the position was strange and unnatural.

"Copy" Vonyu noded, "from fleet headquarters (Glagaf Byral) for the Captain (Salerl). Transfering it to the wrist

computer (Kryuno) of the Captain."

"From fleet headquarters directed at me?" Bersot mutters with a surprised expression while looking at the same time at his wrist computer (Kryuno).
And snorted "Senior communications officer (Alm Drokia), inter-bubble communication (Drosh Flaktedal) to squadron flagship (Glaga Sov)"

"Contents, please" replied Vonyu.

"With permission from fleet headquarters, this warship takes individual action."

Vonyu carried out the order promptly. "Communication completed."

"Now, does Line Wing Officer (Fektodai) Abriel know where we will be going to?" Bersot asked out of the blue.

"No, I don't" replied Duhir without emotions.
How should I possibly know, he thought, and felt his chest become heavy.

"Captain (Salerl), inter-bubble communication (Drosh Flaktedal) from squadron headquarters" Vonyu reported.

"It says, permission for individual action granted."

"Very well." Bersot began ordering, "senior navigator (Alm Rilbiga) perform space-time fusion (Gor Putarloth) immediately with communications ship ‘Tokrool’."

‘Tokrool’ was the warship which sent the inter-bubble communication (Drosh Flaktedal).
"Is it by any chance, Captain (Salerl), that this is your the long time dream coming true?" Vonyu teases.

"My long time dream is what?"

Vonyu was about to answer.

"That's alright," the Captain waves with his hand. "No need to answer. I understand."

"And what about that?"

"It is different. To grant the dream of this little man, fleet headquarters (Glagaf Byral) would not have come down, " Bersot gazed at the senior communications officer (Alm Drokia).
"What words did you probably have to say?"

"May I say it out loud?" Asked Vonuy quietly.

"If I'm not around" the Captain allowed this liberty.

"But where there are more people around?"

"Do not ask for permission to talk dirty behind someone."

"You don't think so? Great, then I won't ask for permission."

"I do not understand how it's like for you to keep a secret ," Bersot sat down into the captain's seat.
"Anyway, our duty is to let Line Wing Officer (Fektodai) Abriel transfer to the 'Tokrool'."

"Me?" Duhir was surprised.

"So it is," Bersot noded to him, "you have been summon by fleet headquarters."

"It is a summoning?" he asked again thinking it was stupid to do so.

"Do you know why?"

"No, no" Duhir shook his head.

"You are being modest. As a young one you are being spared."

"I'm not polite" Duhir felt he understood nothing.

"It is impossible to tell what will happen if I let you say what you want."

"The military academy (Kenru) does not teach such etiquette."

"I know. Even I graduated from there."

Duhir let loose a deep sigh from his heart while keeping a serious appearance.
He wanted honestly to keep arguing with this captain, but feared that he will lose out first.

"In short, you are to appear there. That's all."

"Captain (Salerl), do you know something?"

"In a sense." Bersot was confident.

"It probably is what?" Duhir's eyes twinkle.

"Your Highness (Feia) that is your title (Traiga). Or, is there something else special about you?"

Only he could not think it would be that certain. However, Duhir never heard of a case before in which a lowly Line Wing Officer (Fektodai) was called to fleet headquarters (Glagaf Byral) even if he is part of the Imperial family (Fasanzoerl).

"Although, fleet headquarters may have given some thought about the Imperial family (Fasanzoerl), but I did not think that the senior officers would give special treatment."
Except that, duh! as if thought — no, another special meaning ? Did he have something special other than being from the Imperial family (Fasanzoerl)?

"I presume they didn't call you for social activities." Bersot interrupted.

Because the Emperor's (Spunej) grandchild happens to be a subordinate of a commander of the Star Force (Laburéc) he would never think of saying hello for nothing.
Rather it would have been an insult to the Abriel.

"Alright. I don't have the slightest idea what it's about." Duhir said honestly.

"Hm." Bersot pondered with his hand to his chin
"I do not know about a special status or the special circumstances why a Hecto-Commander (Bomowas) would not dream of becoming a squadron commander. But it must have something to do with your birth."

Or something like that, Duhir thought.

"Space-time fusion (Gor Putarloth) with communications ship 'Tokrool' in 70 minutes." announced the senior navigator (Alm Rilbiga).

13th Twin Thorns Fleet Flagship (Byr Lobina Bolpel Glaga) 'Shykau' made a sortie from the Elkon gate, but it had been located at the rear of the front. A few warships are accompanying it, making it difficult to think of as the fleet headquarters' warship.

The simple fact that the communications ship shuttle(boat) frequently makes space-time fusion (Gor Putarloth) and separation with it, makes it the flagship of the fighting Fleet.
The communications ship 'Tokrool' is alongside the ' Shykau'.
The 'Shykau' is a patrol warship. But has been given modifications to become the fleet headquarters' warship.
As a squadron flagship must participate in a battle as well as their limited number there is no distinction between itself and other warships.
As headquarters equipment and facilities are bigger than are necessary for a Half-Fleet Flagship (Glaga Yadobyral) or patrol warship they have (not) been mass-produced.
However, when a Half-Fleet Flagship (Glaga Yadobyral) like the 'Shykau' becomes the fleet headquarters warship it does not have all the required equipment.
Still the low number does not necessitate mass production. Therefore, extensive modifications are made on a patrol warship to become a Half-Fleet Flagship.
This includes carrying six communications boat (Peria), a conference room, various department offices, and provide living quarters for the necessary headquarters personnel.
The space of 12 enormous mine (Hoksath) must be sacrificed for this.

Even this is not enough. Therefore, the inside of the ‘ Shykau’, is the answer to the challenge to put the many functions into such limited space.

Duhir walked the complicated passageway.
It was beyond luxury for a Line Wing Officer (Fektodai) to use a mobile platform (Yazuria).
There are probably many outside visitors when it becomes a fleet headquarters.
Many improved signs prevent getting lost.
Here and there guards (Sash Leitofec) are posted.
It is unthinkable that a hostile person can invade headquarters.
Rather than patrolling, it is probably in order to kill time to stand guard.
When there is something to prepare fleet headquarters must have a lot of guards.
Before long he arrived in front of the entrance to the bridge command seat (Gahorl Gral).
It is being protected by honor guard (Sash Idar).
They are security experts traditionally selected from the guards or paratrooper (Sash Wakerol).
As expected, there is genuine tension.
They seem to have known of Duhir's visit beforehand.
Certainly, they knew about his standing.

"Line Wing Officer (Fektodai), I regret to inform you, that it is my duty to make a body inspection." said one of the honor guard.

"I respect your duty." replied Duhir from the service platform. Duhir is being searched to the skin.

The physical examination was over.
"I beg your pardon." said the honor guard who turned his back on Duhir.

The door opens before him.
The honor guard (Sash Idar) led Duhir with their peculiar unique walking methods.
A few steps upfront, a honor guard steps forward, and gave the announcement.

"Line Wing Officer (Fektodai) Abriel has arrived."

The flag officers of the 13th Fleet (Byr Lobina) were on the bridge command seat.
Most of the people here should have been in military service since before Duhir was born.
Duhir saluted them.

"Hardships, Line Wing Officer (Fektodai) Abriel" came the greeting from the woman with blood colored lips who was on the single step elevated platform.

It was Fleet Commander in Chief (Glaharerl Byral) Star Force Field Marshal (Spainec Laburar) Kotoponi.

"Commander in Chief (Glaharerl)" Duhir saluted her again.

"Guide Line Wing Officer (Fektodai) Abriel to the Commander in Chief (Glaharerl) office" ordered Kotoponi to the honor guard.

It seems his business with the bridge command seat ended with this.
Disappointed at the thought, Duhir saluted and left.
Two guards were waiting when he left through the door.
These two seem to be guiding to the office.

The Commander in Chief's office is a room mainly used for meetings, and its wide space is to allow all the Fleet staff officers to fit in.

The floor was laid with a long and thick carpet, a conference desk made of ebony wood was installed which seem to fit a modest family.
Duhir is led to the last seat.
The guards who accompanied him stand firmly at attention across the door.
Of course they did not talk idly. They were quiet.
Duhir put both hands on a knee and kept still.
From a very early age, in public display before a crowd, he learned and got used to sitting well.
His father used to say, that the most important quality for a person born into the Imperial family is to have strength in patience.
But Abriels by nature had little of this nature.
There is little public attention here which is better. He was confident to maintain such a posture for one or two seconds.
If the Commander in Chief (Glaharerl) does not want to torture the Royalty (Fasanzoerl) for some reason, he cannot be left unattended for long.
On the other side of a large desk was the chair of the Commander in Chief.
Behind the chair hung 'the three headed dragon (Larth Biharel)' which was the symbol of the post of the Fleet Commander in Chief (Glaharerl Byral),
the imperial headquarters (Rue Gla) with the Gaftonosh (

Gaftonosh), two crossing-over spines and the stylized figure of 13 combines with fleet headquarters (Gla Byral) design.
And the crest banner (Gal Gura) of the Kotoponi family, black with a silver cross which is called (Kuroti).

The Kotoponi family coat of arms is known to be the most simple among the 29 Abh founding families.
Rumor has it that the ancestor of Kotoponi spend three seconds to finish it; conveniently drew two lines to work as coat of arms, which in his mind had to intersect at a right angle.
Kotoponi's reputation is not to take time for decisions.
However, the ratio of the length of the drawn lines has been passed on to the present time.
It was a crest Duhir was used to see but the cross always raised uneasiness he thought.
Somehow, he felt he could not calm down.

Could the vertical axis be extended a little, if it's not possible, could the crossbar be lowered a little, he thought.
He was criticizing the crest of another house; this rudeness cannot be forgiven even for an Abriel.
Only a Kotoponi is qualified to criticize the cross of the Kotoponi.

That is why nobody says anything, but if there is a brave man to break the taboo or if a Kotoponi is born with proper aesthetic sense won't they agree with him?

"His Highness the Commander in Chief (Lonyu Glaharerl)" the guard shouted.

Duhir stood up and saluted toward the chair.

The commander in Chief was alone. She returned the salute lightly, and took a seat.
Duhir finished saluting and began to sit down when Kotoponi ordered in a low but clear voice "go down."[1]

Was it for herself or him he thought; Duhir was puzzled. But the words were meant for the crew member (Sash) behind her.

"Yes" he heard an answer immediately from the back.

"Let nobody in" Kotoponi added an order.

The crew member left, Duhir and Kotoponi were the only two left.
If here was the Imperial Court, Kotoponi must express

respect.
His imperial prince (Rue Kler) is his status in the Imperial palace (Ruebei) should be respected, but Duhir is also a prince (Lars) and the grandson of the master of the Imperial palace.
But, above all here was a battlefield, the positions cannot be described as reversed.
As a Line Wing Officer (Fektodai) he cannot look straight at a Star Force Field Marshal (Spainec Laburar).

"An Imperial Decree (Bisozerl Kimna) was send out", the Commander in Chief (Glaharerl) said without any introduction.
"Do you know the procedures for an Imperial Decree?"

"Yes"

Royal seal means top secret.
The contents are encoded within the wrist computer (Kryuno) of the Emperor (Spunej), and except for special cases, never sent with an electromagnetic wave;
It is delivered in a memory sheet (Jesh).
The memory piece is put in a box, and a seal is made by the Emperor himself, too.

Only a limited number of wrist computer (Kryuno) can remove the encryption on the Imperial Decree. Their number is not a 100 within the Milky Way.
Furthermore, when solving the holder of the wrist computer itself must be fitting to decipher the text, and there are many restrictions such as immediate deletion of the decoded text after reading.
Kotoponi inserted the memory sheet (Jesh) into the slid.

"It is in. Your status should be able to decipher it."

"Yes", that ability is surely given to a flight officer (Lodair) from the Imperial family (Fasanzoerl) to decode a code exclusively used by the Emperor.
The information is transferred from the memory sheet (Jesh) into the wrist computer, and only displays the content the person is allowed to know.
Of course, Duhir's wrist computer had that ability.

"How does it go? Are you afraid that I would ask about the secret content?" Kotoponi asked.

"No. It's not so."

"Finish it quickly. I am busy."

For a person with the family name Kotoponi the most unbearable thing will be a human being who spends wasteful time on conduct.
If that human being may become the monarch of himself in the future it would come with even more uneasiness.

However, Duhir could not hold asking the question. "Why would you share it with me?"

"The permission to this information was granted because Your Highness (Feia) are an officer with the title (Traiga) suitable for the Royal throne" explained Kotoponi in one breath.
"So your superior officers are not entitled to know this. I already read it enough to know so it's your turn."

Duhir felt his question was not being answered.
As Kotoponi says, there is surely both the qualification and the ability to read an Imperial Decree.
However, there is no obligation that he must read it.
But should he press on with one question after another.
Fortunately, the Commander in Chief (Glaharerl) seemed to have sympathized with him.

"Conveying the contents is what I had in mind."

"I understand."

That reason was enough.
As the Commander in Chief wishes to discuss an order, the conclusion is that Duhir has to know the contents of the order beforehand.
Although he did not understand yet the reason why she had to inform him about the order, he had to refrain from asking more questions.

"The story is not over yet." Kotoponi's dark blue eyebrows showed a glimpse of unpleasantness at the edges.

"Excuse me, Ma'am" Duhir was rather relieved.

"According to the Imperial Decree contents, it is possible that my Fleet will be given a serious task."

"Yes," *a more serious task than the present combat operations* — Duhir could not imagine what.

"As a result, depending on the state of things, my Fleet may stand alone from the Empire mainland."

This wasn't particularly surprising. In addition, it is not worrisome if the isolation is temporary.
In the history of the Empire, there were cases where it was impossible for a Fleet to connect with the supply line .
Sometimes, contact was impossible to reestablish even when it was there.
But, he did not really know how this kind of situation is related to him.

"In that case, as noble officer we will consider you as representative of Her Imperial Majesty (Spunej Erumita). "

"What?" He could not but be surprised by this. "I will take command of the Fleet?"

He knew enough to know that this day would come, but he was not ready yet in all aspects.
He will have to be at least a graduate from Military University (Voskura) or the army officer (Bosnal) of the Fleet will be annoyed.

"Hypothetically, if I transfer command authority to your noble officer then it will be so. But it is perhaps a

symbolic position to be filled.
The final decision is my job. I will observe your performance as officer, and will consider this.”

"There is another question," Duhir cut in unwanted. " May I?"

Kotoponi's position on the battlefield cannot be reversed forever, he thought.
Even if Duhir became Star Force Field Marshal (Spainec Laburar) by that time she will already be killed in action or have retired.

He could not but be upset now that the day of reversed roles has arrived.
A reason for him to clarify and check the reason behind her decision.

"Permission granted. Ask your question." Kotoponi fortunately noded.

"My understanding is that should a military unit however big become stranded then the supreme commander will become a representative of Her Imperial Majesty (Spunej Erumita).

"Your understanding is completely correct."

"Supposedly, an unfortunate situation like this happens, would not the Commander in Chief (Glaharerl) act as representative of Her Majesty (Erumiton) in this case?"

"And, there is no problem when a representative decides to rely on another representative of Her Imperial Majesty ."

"Although this conforms to military regulations, but why would you make such a decision?"

"Because under certain conditions, I must enhance the vigilance for a long-term isolation."

"I do not understand," Duhir was confused again. "I thought that under this kind of condition there shouldn't be any danger coming from the duration of the isolation."

"Perhaps 'long-term' in your mind has a different quality from the 'long-term' I said a moment ago."

"A difference in quality, what could that be?"

"You will understand when you finished reading the order. If you don't then I have nothing to say."

So that's how it is. By that time I will be revealed to be an idiot — Duhir thought to himself.
"However, not every Fleet (Byr) has a Royalty (Fasanzoerl) serving. If it were so what would you do?"

"But, you are here."

"Isn't this hypothetical question allowed?"

"It is not necessary." Kotoponi shook her head.
"There may be more or no Royalty (Fasanzoerl) available. As said, as an officer I will assume authority on behalf of Her Majesty (Erumiton). But not considering a better way, it cannot be said to be wise."

"Placing me as representative is a better way?"

"That depends on your qualification as an officer. I do not know my insect shellfish[2] officer well.
I know you at most only as Her Majesty's (Erumiton) grandson or the famous new flight officer (Lodair). I do not know your qualification as an officer.

If you are not suitable for the position, and judged as such, then I will drag you down without hesitation."

"I'm relieved I asked you about that."

"As an Abrial you lack ambition" Kotoponi glared slightly at him.

"I'm failing because of my response?"

"No. It is too early for a conclusion."

This was the biggest surprise. Kotoponi was withholding a decision.

"You have no questions anymore?"

"No, you want another question?"

"You can ask until you don't have any more, but I don't mind if you don't have one. I am taking the time to do so. "

Indeed, a Commander in Chief (Glaharerl)'s time is as precious as the water on a rocky planet.

"Where is the meaning in telling me beforehand the strategic content?"

"To prevent confusion in time," Kotoponi paused a moment and added, "even if you are not, a time of great confusion will probably come. I want to get things done quickly.
In addition, I must consider the possibility that fleet headquarters and your communication officiers are going to be cut off."

"In that case, who will judge over my qualification?"

"No one will judge. Before you return to your ship, I intend to give you your own orders personally. Its content will state that in case of an emergency you must go to the fleet headquarters and must not hesitate to make any sacrifices.
Submit it to your immediate commander at the time you can contact.
If fleet headquarters has been destroyed he can make his own judgment."

"Paying any sacrifices?" Duhir looked at Kotoponi

steadily.

"So it is. I emphasize that it is not rhetoric. It is a priority to bring your Highness in even if the Fleet is close to be pulverized."

"Now" Duhir stood up bewildered. "It seems to me I'm guarded or is it not!"

"This is exactly the order given to guard your Highness."

"I cannot accept that!" Duhir got enraged.

Abrials are soldiers. They felt that to fall on the battlefield is a good way to end one's life.
Even for the Emperor (Spunej) there is no difference.
Of course, there is always the personal guard; when the imperial state ship (Rue Ruhorl) is moving out a number of warships on guard duty will escort it.
To go down under the fire of an enemy ship is preferred but not limited to being killed by an assassin or a madman.
In a manner of speaking they are the same in terms of health care.
However, when being with the Fleet, the Emperor is the

commander who can lead the Fleet to victory.

A Fleet is never meant to protect an Emperor.
Besides, Duhir is a mere Royalty (Fasanzoerl), not even an Emperor.
He joined to fight as an Abh. There was no reason to be looked after.
Being guarded by a Fleet only calls feelings of humiliation for Duhir.

Even if it's a Star Force Field Marshal (Spainec Laburar), where does he even have the right to force a humiliation?

"Dissatisfied?" asked Kotoponi.

"Yes." Duhir replied calmly.

"Sit down, Line Wing Officer (Fektodai)"

"However, fleet commander (Glaharerl)"

"Hold on chick. You are still a Line Wing Officer (Fektodai). This here is my flagship (Glaga).
You will follow my orders."

"Yes." it was all too true, Duhir took his seat. But it didn't mean he accepted it.

He waited for the opportunity in which his raging blue flame-like anger in his chest to latch out.

"Concerning the pride of the Abriels, it is of no concern to me.
I order you, and you will accept it whether you like it or not.
Or have you been complaining when you were escorted here, and now you demand me to take them away when you leave?"

"No……" Duhir could not object.

"How can your mind be clear if you cannot control yourself?
If you cannot then you cannot even be called a chick.
Perhaps being on the battlefield is in itself a mistake. The Star Force (Laburéc) hasn't come down enough for me to rely on eggs.
As it is possible to return you along the sick and wounded back to the capital (Arosh), you can take care of

the hatched, at least you can provide warmth."

Yes. He disregarded the pride and courage to protect someone.
"My apologies Madame fleet commander. I will follow your instructions."

"You should have understood" Kotoponi relaxes her shoulders, "I didn't expect to find a weakness, but you are an Abriel. I got a chill from your expression a moment ago."

Kotoponi did not appear to have a chill.
Most of all he was unhappy with his 'superior act', but he decided to keep quiet for now.
Still, did he look that scary?

"Does Your Honor (Lonyu) think that it is likely that we will be isolated?" Duhir asked her the question.

"I don't know." Kotoponi replied. "There are too many uncertain elements to determine.
Even if I know, it may cause unnecessary confusion to discuss it now."

"I understand."

"Any more questions?"

"Frankly, I still cannot accept Your Honor's idea. However, knowing the imperial order might clear my doubts, therefore, I'm going to hold my questions back."

"Very well. Then start decoding."

Duhir began to decipher.
Decoding and reading were over in no time.

"This is……"

"Your impressions?" Kotoponi smiled poisonously with her red lips.

He was still unable to express well in words.
"However, this is……" Duhir is halting, "is not decided yet."

"My instructions might come to naught."

Imperial Decree (Bisozerl Kimna) contents:
Prepare a study for the Fleet to enter into 'Hania Federation〉 space, to disarm Federation Forces, and to be stationed there.

In other words, make studies and preparations for the decision, but whether it is going to be given is unclear.

"Her Majesty (Erumiton) really likes to give unreasonable requests.
Without telling the purpose you can only do a study or not. She just wants to prepare a magic act."

Duhir was relieved to know that even Kotoponi complained.
"The Chief of Staff (Was Kasaler) should know this."

"Yes. I appreciate the note." Kotoponi smiled, "magic acts are exclusively her work."

"Are you telling me now that this jam-packed.....that the fleet commander thinks that it's not for nothing?"

"I don't know. I'm just a front line commander. This is beyond my area of responsibility.

Not to be modest. Regarding my field of responsibility, the range in front of a Commander is limited. I cannot prepare for every case, but if it's within range of possibilities then I can anticipate it. I think that's good enough."

"In the current situation it is my duty to keep the imperial order in mind, is it?" Duhir varified.

"Yes. Keep it in mind only."

"Understood." Of course he had no intention to tell anyone.

"Return the memory sheet (Jesh) with the decoded message erased now."

Duhir did as told.

"Well then, it's farewell Line Wing Officer (Fektodai)," Kotoponi said. "Return to your warship."

Duhir saluted and was about to leave. However, he turned around when he realized a possibility.
He saw Kotoponi returning a suspicious look.
"Fleet commander, you should....." Duhir was unable to

continue.

"What should I?"

"No, nothing. Excuse me. With your permission." Duhir saluted again, and was going to leave this time.

"Line Wing Officer (Fektodai)!" However, Kotoponi hailed.
"I will only worship and kneel in front of the Jade Imperial Throne (Skemsorl Roen).
I do not wish my flagship (Glaga) to have a temporary Imperial throne.
Even if you assume absolute military authority afterward ,
I do not wish to meet you again before the end of the operation."

"So am I" agreed Duhir, and corrected himself in a hurry. "I hope that your fondness to me will let us meet again in front of the Imperial throne's ornament instead of a temporary one."

"As you say." Kotoponi joined in. "Once the chick has grown, it would be my pleasure to meet it again."

Chapter 6: The shore of the lake[3] (Gurnil Biteym)

The battle for the Kemal star system has ended.
Now, the Kemal Sord (Sord Kemal) is completely subjugated and under the control of the Imperial Star Force (Rue Laburéc).
However, the enemy is not yet driven out of the whole star system. The enemy Fleet is scattered throughout the system waiting for the opportunity for a counterattack.

It is believed that Akaddo has the greatest military force in the system.
Akaddo is a huge gas planet with several satellites.
The existence of the satellite group is what makes the Kemal star system a munitions production site.
Countless resource mines and factories are concentrated here.

A Star Force (Laburéc) unit is holding the inner planets in check.
When a fixed star has been secured it is routine to establish a mobile anti-matter fuel factory (Joth Hoka).
Addionally, construction ship (Dausiya), store ship (Rebbonia), and hygienic warship (Garyumiac)[4] are sent into orbit of a secured planet.

The warships belonging to the 1st Devastation Squadron (Sov Direr Kasna) are alongside a construction ship and are undergoing repairs.

Although the battle is said to be over, it is not safe to build a mobile city (Laknebh Hoka).
However, several tens of transport ships (Issazec) went as substitute into orbit of Menderes, the second planet of the Kemal star system.
These specific transport ships have instead of their cargo a restaurant, a bar, exercise facilities, recreation halls, theatres and aquariums.
Additionally, they have a fine arts museum, a zoo, and as many recreation facilities as can be created in the narrow and dense space of a warship.

All these transport ships are standard Ktel class ships.
It is a highly mobile transport ship, originally this small transport ship was intended to be part of a reconnaissance half-fleet during operations.
Furthermore, it has the same armament level as that of a guard ship (Laitéc).
When under enemy attack the ship can retreat from the battlefield even if the army officer (Bosnal) is away or inexperienced.

The ‘Batoktel’ is among the first vessels to receive special internal changes. It has become a park.
There are five park decks (Zok Der), each one is ten WesDagh in length and two WesDagh in width.
Three of the decks are further divided into several sections. However, two decks have no sections.

One of them, the 4th park deck (Zok Der Gona), known as ‘Lake shore park (Wabes Gurnil Biteym)’ has been reserved today for the 1st Devastation Squadron.

"First, let us pay silent tribute to our allies and enemies who fell on the battlefield." said Kilo-Commander (Cheüass) Atosuryua, the Commander (Leshiek).
More than 200 army officers lowered their heads, and silence fell over the place.
Atosuryua is standing on a little elevated place. To be more specific, she is standing on a little hill.
The hill is covered by carpet grass (Tikrebh).
It is a genetically created cross of short grass and small flower bloom. It won't wither even when being trampled on.
Its flower will die off, but it has an admirable characteristic which let it bloom a new one after tens of

minutes.
In fact, army officers were lining up on the same grass.

The 4th park deck is divided into a part covered by the carpet grass and the pond. Trees were sparsely planted in the grass.
Painted wall and ceiling surfaces have created an illusion as if you are at a lake under a vast blue sky.
The creatures are real. Most noticeably is the little screaming sound of birds.
A bird which cannot fly can disturb the precious atmosphere with its high voice.

"The silence is over." Said Atosuryua in a slightly resentful tone, and gave next a solemn order.
"All hands, start preparing a toast."
Army officer (Bosnal) lined up among the more than several dozen tables between one place and the pond; everything was prepared from the cups up to 88 different kinds of liquors.
Army officers scattered quickly, grabbed glasses, and filled them with their favorite drinks.
Aside from Atosuryua, the executive officers of the squadron (Sov) had tables prepared for themselves.

Jinto took a glass, and poured rosy grape wine (Lortek) for himself.
A hand appears from his side. It is Lafiel.

"What do you want to drink?" Jinto asked, seeing her holding a jade glass in her hand.

"I would be happy with a mixture of honey wine (Ketek) and apple brandy (Lertel)."

"Wouldn't it at least taste bad if apple brandy (Lertel) and honey wine (Ketek) are mixed?"

"You have bad taste." Lafiel gave an unreadable look. " This, this is too sweet for me."

"You are right. Well, forget it."

Abhs can drink liquor without exceptions. The alcohol is being broken up before it comes into their blood.
With Jinto's constitution it's very bad to drink.

It looks like drinking this carefree will make me bad.
Besides she doesn't get drunk.

If it's Samson, he would say it's a curse. The question had certainly come to mind; I wonder, why would they be drinking it?
Although, the Abh dislike it they would say "This is only to imitate humans." If it was like this they should have pretended to be drunk, too. Jinto thought.

Lafiel gives him a jade glass in which Jinto was going to fill honey wine (Ketek).
"Not like that" Lafiel stopped him. "honey wine (Ketek) is too sticky."

"Is it?"

"You have to stir the drink evenly with the stick. That's common sense."

"That's it?" Although, he thought he had been familiarized with the Abh society, he still seems to be lacking.
"But, like this, I don't think it will mix. And, is this how the mixture is made?"

"It's flavor."

"Yes."

He made the drink according to the instructions and handed it over.
A similar scene took place here and there; preparing the toast took unexpectedly some time.
There appears to be many preferences in taste for liquor.
Atosuryua had quickly done her glass of cider (Rinme) and held it in her hand, but waited patiently for her subordinates to finish their drinks.

"Toast preparation is completed, Commander." Sobash informed. He, himself, held something green in his hand.

"Now, my brave army officer (Bosnal)" Atosuryua began the speech.
"Well, whether or not you are brave does not matter today, but it has nothing to do with it.
In any case, it is good to be brave.
Yet, the bravery of our army officers gathered in the 1st Devastation Squadron (Sov Direr Kasna) has no tradition to bear.
Therefore, it is our duty and right to make one.
Today, a new chapter will be added to the tradition again ."

Jinto was listening closely at her side to the speech.

"The first tradition: Since there are many new people, I will explain it.
First, when the 1st Devastation Squadron (Sov Direr Kasna) parties saluting is prohibited.
However, it does not mean that you can forget about respect for a superior officer, colleagues or subordinates.
Someone who is especially rude, I will invite him to my territory.
I will also arrange a room for him between the agricultural land (Basev) and the hydroponic farm (Glek)
."

"What kind of rudeness deserves such splendid punishment?" A voice broke out from the midst of army officers.

"Think about it for yourselves. However, just make sure you remember it.
That section has been converted for confinement. A lonesome place. If the person likes to be lonely, it might be very pleasing there."

Moaning could be heard. But, it seemed to be rather pleasant.

"By the way, the next tradition forbids wasting food.
Sometimes people neglect food because of some strange preferences.
Depending on the culture, for some people filled fat milk biscuit (Bazor) may have an important meaning.
Perhaps, it's a certain religious concept, but I cannot understand it.
Of course it is not bad taste because I cannot understand the different cultures.
As the first Commander of this squadron I, Baron Febdash (Lyuf Febdak), forbid this permanently.
If you can't because of faith then hide it, understand?
Good."

Voices of protest did not rise for this.

"Now, the new tradition tonight is very simple.
Landed nobility (Voda) of the squadron have to give everyone a treat when there is an opportunity. This is a noble duty.
I will make sure of this beautiful tradition."

Cheers roared.

At the moment there is only one landed nobility in the

1st Devastation Squadron (Sov Direr Kasna).
It is Jinto who is Count Hyde (Dreu Haidar).
If this expands to noble (Sif) then there are some more.
For example, Atosuryua is Baron Febdash (Lyuf Febdak)
Yes. However, she is a sovereign (Fapyut), and not landed nobility.
You are not called landed nobility if you don't have an inhabitated planet in your star system.

Incidentally, the creation of this new tradition did not include Jinto's opinion.
Rather, for Atosuryua there was no other opinion.
Jinto was irritated.
It was not about money.
The revenue from Count Hyde's nation (Dreuhynu Haidar) was enormous.
Most of which is being re-invested into Count Hyde's nation, but even then there is enough left for Jinto such that he cannot spend all.
If it's having this kind of party every week then he can afford it.
Then why does he only have to provide the money, and not also as he wished take care of the preparation? This arrangement is probably not good.
As ship's clerk (Wiig) and supervisor/controller (Bynkerl

) he is busy when the ship isn't underway.
Yes, it was Jinto's idea to rent the park deck for an open party.
Actually, a park deck has a bad impression for someone from a land world (Nahen).
Anyway, a planet called land world can have various decent areas, but the simulated environment in a transport ship cannot match the memory of home for landers.
Furthermore, emphasizing artificial environment could be taken as natural for the people above the ground; this upsets the people from the ground.
But once in a while this is probably the problem for a misunderstanding between Abh and Landers, Jinto thought.
After having these thoughts, the arrangement of the party didn't feel so painful anymore.

However, it is still unreasonable.

"Let me introduce tonight's sponsor. Everyone, give him a big applause."

Jinto went up the hill reluctantly while the applause increased.

He also had to greet.
You must pretend to hold a party of your own volition because you have to no matter how much you don't like it.
Jinto convinced himself that this was the duty of the noble.

"I will be brief, so everyone bear with me." Jinto said and got attention.
"Today, we are having this modest banquet for our services.
We are all here thanks to luck and hard work.
Please be proud.
And keep making us proud.
I'm sorry if this sounds like pride, but, fortunately, the Count Hyde's nation (Dreuhynu Haidar) management is popular.
Additionally, I think, we would like to keep receiving this honor in the future."

More cheers and applause were given.

Jinto held up a glass.

"And I think, that I would like to meet all of you and the new army officer (Bosnal) there.

I couldn't get it in time this time, but the special liquor from the Count Hyde's nation (Dreuhynu Haidar) will be available at the next opportunity, and I want you all to taste it.
However, I will leave the privilege of greeting to someone else. Now then, cheers!"

"Thank you for the delicious feast, Your Highness the Count (Lonyu Dreur)!" army officer (Bosnal) sang in a chorus.
Here and there at the meeting place the sounds of glasses being struck can be heard.

"Well, today we introduce the presenter. Line Wing Officer (Fektodai) Gnombosh, come."

"Yes." Gnombosh approached with a ready look.

"Applaud." Jinto rallied.
Army officers clapped their hands obediently.
Jinto felt lonely with an embarrassed thought. It seems to be shown by the magical power of commanding it.
However, administrative officer (Lodairl Sazoirl) Jinto is an administrative officer of the armed forces.
He has no command.

It was impossible for him to change to the military flight department (Garéc) for a command without the spatial-sense (Frokaj).

Lafiel greeted Jinto with a critical look while he left the hill for Gnombosh.
"Did I say strange things?" Jinto was worried.

"I don't think so. You were human trash, though."

"What?" Jinto twisted his neck to the unexpected criticism.

"How could you leave this place to such a child?"

"The chairmanship is not commanding, and he is not a child.
Besides, as flight officer (Lodair) his rank is higher than the majority of the humans who are here. Still....."

"What?"

"I guess I'm used to treating others as children who don't age, Lafiel."

"Idiot."

But actually, as for Gnombosh and Lafiel - Jinto appears five years older.
So far the Empire (Frybar) has no need to have real children on the battlefield.

"And it was a dull greeting. It seemed to sell well."

"That was a landed nobility (Voda) obligation. At least, Samson did it."

"Oh, the so called very exclusive landed nobility (Voda)."

"As if it's someone else's affair. Even you will become a landed nobility (Voda)."

"That's farfetched even if it could be true."

"Yes."
Lafiel's territory, Viscountess Paryun's territory (Berskor Paryun) has no inhabitable planet.
Therefore, it is necessary to terraform a suitable planet to support life so that she becomes a landed nobility.
It will take a long time.
Furthermore, terraforming will probably begin after

Lafiel retires.

In other words, after she finishes her obligation as a Imperial family/Royalty (Fasanzoerl).
If she is going to sit on the Jade Imperial Throne (Skemsorl Roen) then that time will be pushed even further back.
Of course, this is also true if the war is not over yet.
It was truly a tale from a distant future.

Gnombosh had been rushing onto the hill.
"Well, bring in the dishes. All hands, attention please."
Automaton tables carrying the dishes come by across the water. They even descended from the ceiling.
"Please, get out of the way. Crew members (Sash) over there, step a bit aside. Crew members (Sash) over there, don't touch the dishes with your hands until the tables stop.
Then,… Hey!" Gnombosh's voice turned to a scream. " What are you doing now? Deca-Commander (Lowas) Ekuryua!"

From Jinto's position he did not see well what Ekuryua was doing.
Army officer (Bosnal) have been busy criticizing the

dishes.

"Understood, it will do like this." Gnombosh said.
"Anyway, please do not move from the position there now. Keep still until I signal you."

"The set-up is bad, Jinto." Lafiel was watching the descending table group. "I think directing is unnecessary. "

"It's the first time." Jinto excused. "The party is proceeding well. But I thought that it was a good idea."

"At the time I also thought the greeting was good."

"Is that so." Jinto sighed. "But, if it were you, how would you have greeted then?"

"Let's see" Lafiel tilted her head. "I haven't been in this kind of situation yet.
Besides, I don't think I can greet as funny like that."

"Really. Then I supposed, I will try this at the next party." Jinto proposed.

"I will have you introduce yourself. What if, I'm going to pull the strings behind the scene?"

"Denied!" Lafiel answered immediately.

"Is it not important for a Imperial family/Royalty (Fasanzoerl) to make a speech? No, maybe not as Imperial family/Royalty but except when being a commander."

"I can do a speech when going into battle. But what good is there to hold a speech for drinking humans?
Besides, I cannot just turn an army officer (Bosnal) into a practice partner."

"Well, then don't complain to me."

"I didn't complain. I just expressed my impression."
Lafiel raised one eyebrow.
"Then perhaps you wanted me to praise you?"

"No, that's not....."

"Well, right."

Gnombosh's effort finally bored fruit, and the tables were set at their proper place.
"Go ahead, everyone. Blankets are set, and chairs are also available. Of course you are free to use them; I don't mind.
Enjoy the food and pleasant chats for a while."
Gnombosh said in a relieved voice, and went down the hill.

"Thank you, Line Wing Officer (Fektodai) Gnombosh."
Jinto raised his glass to show his appreciation.

"Thank you." Gnombosh said with a tired look. "I was tense."

"I will be counting on you later."

"Yes." with a tired face, Gnombosh left.

"What do you want to drink?" he asked.

"Give me the grape fruit juice(Tyl Murem). I still have to preside."

"There is no need to tense up, just enjoy it." Jinto smiled,

and was about to grab the glass.

However, in a flash, someone handed the trophy to Gnombosh.
It was Ekuryua.
Gnombosh received it in a surprised manner, while Ekuryua poured the drink in silence.
You could not tell what it was by appearance, but it was certainly not grape fruit juice.

"Thank you, Deca-Commander (Lowas)." astonished, Gnombosh thanked.

Ekuryua gave him a glance, and left.

Did she intend to apologize?
"By the way, a while ago what was Deca-Commander (Lowas) Ekuryua ....." as he was going to ask, Atosuryua approached.

"Thank you for your hard work." it was Atosuryua.

Jinto was about to salute reflexively, but reflected on it. It wouldn't be surprising for them for him not to salute. Fortunately, he was holding a glass. He raised it lightly.

"No, it was nothing." Jinto said.

"It was quite a good idea Your Highness the Count (Lonyu Dreur)." Atosuryua praised him.

"Thank you very much."

"However, I do not know when it will be." Atosuryua said. "If we come back to the capital (Arosh) it will be my treat to hold a banquet."

"I'm looking forward to it."

"Yes, I'm looking forward to it. If you write a transfer request, then it has to be after that."

"No, I don't wish to be transferred....."

"Anyway....." Atosuryua looked around the army officer (Bosnal).
"The losses were greater than I thought. I wished more would have been here. I wanted to spend some more money in Lakfakalle."

"As we have been able to predict in advance." Sobash came over.

"Was it so? However, I expected it to be a little easier fight, though." Atosuryua sipped her apple wine. " Further, the result from this."

"And that would be?" Lafiel seemed to be interested. The glass in her hand was already empty.

"Would you like the same drink?" Jinto received the glass .

"Yes." Lafiel passed the glass.

Jinto mixed the honey wine (Ketek) with a stick.
While Jinto made the liquor, Atosuryua talked about the maneuvers which are being considered by fleet headquarters.

"Is this alright with the secrecy?" Sobash verified uneasy.

"I'm saying, perhaps, this is how the operation would be, but it may not be so. As I said it's just a presumption.
I did not particularly eavesdrop."

"I think, we would like to know your reasoning for the presumption." Sobash said doubtfully.

"Oh, I'm sorry, Chief of Staff (Alm Kasalia)" Atosuryua went on.
"That's a sensitive matter."

"Then, what effect will the strategy have?"

"Naturally, it will probably be that," Atosuryua continued talking. "the enemy is driven out of the planet system.
As you know, it is fortified by satellites. As Commander in Chief (Glaharerl) I would use attack ship (Sopaïc).
In this case, bombardment from a warship flying at sublight has no effective means."

"Indeed." said Sobash. "But that's probably because one squadron has insufficient fire power."

"Certainly. It wouldn't be like this if it was only forced onto us. But we have the leading role."

"It is an honor." Sobash smiled wryly.

"Isn't it a great strategy to test the speed limit of an attack ship (Sopaïc)?" threw in the Captain (Salerl) of the ‘ Marscaubh’.

All too soon, the Captains have gathered around Atosuryua.

Of course, the expectation was to test the acceleration limit of the attack ship - Jinto thought.
This must be a joke.
"Finished." Jinto returned the glass to Lafiel.

Lafiel took a sip, and nodded immediately to Jinto. "Yes. Delicious."

"Good." Jinto gave a broad smiled.

"This is a too troublesome star system." Atosuryua sighed with grief. "No matter what, the weapons just keep coming."

"But they're not human," said the Captain of the ‘ Shutoucaubh’.

"That's right," Atosuryua nodded. "Even if it goes on forever we will go against enemy ships.
In other words, our principal objective is to kill."

"This is war. It can't be helped." Sobash said calmly. "Mankind has not developed the technology for a safe war yet."

"Yes," Atosuryua insisted. "but there is a difference between attacking and sinking a ship which results in killing people, and killing people by attacking and sinking a ship."

"You have a unique view." the Captain (Salerl) of the ‘ Nacaubh’ expressed his impression.

"Don't you think so?"

"I have to disagree. Don't you believe that the different views will result in a different way in how combat is being fought?"

"Certainly," Atosuryua said with a reserved praise, "but somehow it surely doesn't feel right."

Jinto understood her feelings.
In wartime, the Abh seem to at least have a tendency to connect a warship together with the crewmen.
Jinto was unable to have this sense of the Abh.
Atosuryua, whose father was a lander, is probably still dragging a marginal lander trait with her like Jinto.

"Besides, there is no common sense in it," said Atosuryua resentfully.

"Oh, really?" stricken, the Captain of the ‘Nacaubh’ chimes in with the echoes of the others.

"The Kemal star system is the ‘People's Sovereign Stellar Union star system’ largest munitions star system." Atosuryua explained.

"No, I should say that it's the only military star system. The Union has concentrated almost all the production capacity in this star system.
But why would this system be on the border with another hostile nation? Thanks to this we suffer these hardships.
I wonder if the ‘Four Nations Alliance Treaty’ have not forgotten, that the Empire (Frybar) is their enemy.

"I think it's a historical issue" said the Captain (Salerl) of the ‘Nacaubh’.
"The star system was a military star system even before the signing of the treaty. Indeed they failed to move it after the conclusion of the treaty."

"I'm aware of that." Atosuryua interrupted his lengthy speech.

"Yes."

"But" Sobash said,
"isn't it thanks to the lack of common sense that we are able to see the end of the war?"

"What do you mean?" tilting her head, Atosuryua asked.

"Since the star system lost the means to contact the outside, the ‘People's Sovereign Stellar Union star system ’ has already lost its ability to sustain successive operations." Sobash stated his thoughts.
"From now on they must conserve their fighting strength. They can't request help from their allies either.
Because a neutral nation, the ‘Hania Federation’, and the enemy, our Empire (Frybar), would be in the way."

"'People's Sovereign Stellar Union star system' dropped out of the war?"

"I also agree with the Chief of Staff," said the Captain of the 'Shutoucaubh'.
"It cannot be anything other than this."

"It would be good if it were true." Atosuryua said seemingly a bit disappointed.

"I think that's very regrettable." said the Captain (Salerl) of the 'Marscaubh'.

"You don't have enough with fighting?" Atosuryua asked .

"Yes."

"That's alright." said the Captain of the 'Nacaubh'. "The ' United Mankind' is surely giving its all."

"How so?" said the Captain (Salerl) of the 'Marscaubh' skeptically. "That nation is in fact very much in pieces."

"No, but we hope the ‘Greater Alkont Republic’ will." said the Captain of the ‘Shutoucaubh’.

The ‘United Mankind’and the ‘People's Sovereign Stellar Union star system’ are federal systems, therefore, they are unlike anything we know.
Of course, if we compare them with the Empire (Frybar) their uniformity is greater.
Anyhow, the same language is used in all star systems, something that's unthinkable in the Empire.
Surely, the language of the Abh is being taught as a foreign language on many of the worlds, but it is an Empire policy not to enforce teaching the language of the Abh to citizens of its territory.
However, this is inferior to the uniformity of the ‘Greater Alkont Republic’.
Although, this nation developed interstellar ship travel it still practices land world (Nahen) principles.
It has the most prosperous interstellar ship trade and a strong bureaucracy binding the star systems together.

Therefore, their resistance will be tough.

"How about you, Chief of Staff?" Atosuryua asked.

"I consider myself to be a trader anytime, and put my heart and soul into it." answered Sobash.
"I hope to quickly return back to the core business."

"I was always independent and carefree." Atosuryua sighed.
"I also hope to quickly return back to the core business."

"How do you plan to manage your territory (Skor)?" asked the Captain of the 'Shutoucaubh'.

"After the war, I will be left to be a good magistrate (Tosairh)." said Baron Febdash (Lyuf Febdak) casually.
"And because my father is still alive."

"So it is."

"How about Vice Hecto-Commander (Roibomowas) Abriel?" Atosuryua turned to the Captain of the 'Flicaubh ' who had been keeping silent.

"I haven't thought about my main business yet, Commander." replied Lafiel.

"Well, as for you, don't you think that being a flight officer (Lodair) is not just a case of studying?"

Lafiel was silent and sipped her honey wine (Ketek) and apple brandy (Lertel) mix — on which she insisted specifically.

Through Jinto's eyes it seemed as if he was asking himself what he did want to do.

"Oh, we shouldn't do this." said Atosuryua after glancing at Jinto. "This is not the place for a council of war. Now, everyone scatter.
A Captain (Salerl) should take this opportunity to further deepen the friendship with one's subordinates.
Perhaps, it is also good to talk to army officer (Bosnal) from another warship."

The Captains smiled wryly and moved on.

"Well, Line Wing Officer (Fektodai) Gnombosh." Jinto patted the shoulder of ‘Flicaubh’'s messenger (Kleria). "This position is all yours. Thank you."

"Yes, Front Flyer (Lekle)."

Jinto also left the place.

The audible singing army officers have already finished their singing rounds.
Somehow, it seemed there are two opposing voices.
Offensive, but better than exchanging blows with the fists.
Jinto began to think that the facility for the banquet was a success.
It's because he borrowed this large park deck which is a bit exaggerated.
A normal storage wouldn't have made this possible.

"Your Highness the Count (Lonyu Dreur)." was suddenly called out.
An unfamiliar crew member (Sash) stood there. It had to be a crewman from another warship.

An attack ship's crew is less than thirty. No matter what, Jinto knows everyone's faces and names.
After all, taking care of their food and their health situation is Jinto's responsibility.
And, a crewman from the ‘Flicaubh’ wouldn't call him ' Your Highness the Count'.
They would call him 'ship's clerk (Wiig)' or 'Front Flyer (Lekle) Lin'.

"What is it?" Jinto asked.

"Is there no accompaniment platform (Derbonyu) here?"

"You mean, the wrist computer (Kryuno) doesn't work?" Jinto asked.
Sometimes Jinto thought the wrist computer (Kryuno) was a universal helper.
Any kind of functions that can be thought of has been integrated.
Depending on the person it can play music or connect to another.
Anyway, if you need company a wrist computer will do.
You can choose your favorite from hundreds of millions of songs.

"I don't think so." replied the crew member (Sash) immediately.

Perhaps for this crew member raising the volume is not enough.
He would like to make the air on the deck vibrate with an electrically amplified voice.

"All right," Jinto said. "I'll arrange it now."

Another crew member arrived panting.
"This here, too, please."

"This is.....?"

The two crew members (Sash) began to make claims.
As Jinto understood it, one crew member was from the ‘ Kercaubh’ and the other from the ‘Nacaubh’.
It seemed they have been competing with a song.
And one demands, that each warship is given one accompaniment platform.

"That's what equality is." said the representative from the ‘Nacaubh’. "If a partner is barehanded then the fight is barehanded, but if one has a weapon then you can't stay silent.
Unless I have equal firepower, I will lose."

"You're too self-conscious" said the representative from the ‘Kercaubh’.
"We don't intend to fight. We just want to enjoy singing purely."

"Then enjoy. We would like to enjoy a song with this here."

"Good, then it's settled."

While the two made their claims, other crew members from other warships gathered.
Perhaps it was amusing, when they also began to demand accompaniment platforms.
I don't know if five will be enough for them — Jinto thought.
But he soon shook off the idea.
The park deck was large. However, it was not enough to fit multiple accompaniment platform.
The fight would be far better if they would just compete singing with each other with their amplified natural voice.
He can at least turn a blind eye.

A whole ring of a soundproofed force field could be considered, but he wouldn't know what point there would be to hold a banquet for.

"No, everyone will have to share one." Jinto declared determinedly.
"The order will be decided by Line Wing Officer (Fektodai) Gnombosh from the 'Flicaubh'."

"You mean the boy who did the chairmanship, the flight officer (Lodair)?"

Jinto nodded and arranged the accompaniment platform.
While apologizing to Gnombosh in his mind.
The accompaniment platform glided on the surface of the water.
For a few seconds he was troubled with where to place it.
As a result, he placed the platform at one end of the edge of the pond.
This should lessen any injuries.
First, crew member (Sash) climbed on the accompaniment platform, and begun to sing passionately a song from some land world (Nahen).
When the song just started, Atosuryua flew in immediately.

"What is the reason for this?" she interrogated.

"They desired it." Jinto began with an excusing tone. "I intended for them to enjoy themselves."

"It's good to have fun, but what about other people?"
Atosuryua stared at Jinto, but smiled immediately.
"It's alright. This is your party, right? To be frank, I don't

understand well what crew members (Sash) do for enjoyment. Perhaps this is good too."

"I am most obliged."

"But, you know, not all crew members (Sash) are enjoying it."

Indeed there was certainly one group that separated from the accompaniment platform.

"Therefore, I put it close to the corner." said Jinto proudly .

"Your idea was good." said Atosuryua while shrinking back her posture.
"But, you know, I will ban it at the next opportunity."

"I will humbly comply with it." Jinto sighed.

Chapter 7: The silent flood (Kufuaperukosu Shiyutoka)

Capital (Arosh) Lakfakalle, 'Larkspur Hall (Wabes Lizel)' in the Imperial palace(Ruebei).
A plane-space projection map (Ja Fad) has been projected in front of the Imperial throne.
The 'Hania Federation' had the Kryb Kingdom(Fek Crÿub) inside it. Ramaj herself was the former queen of that nation.
Although, it is a kingdom(Fek), its political power is unimportant to the Empire (Frybar). The word 'kingdom(Fek)' represents the region, and 'King(Larth)' is closer to an honorary title.
The King of a kingdom is not necessarily a landed nobility(Voda).

The King's main responsibility is to take care of the 'Gate' (Sord) to Lakfakalle. Compared to the impression given by their name, their authority is surprisingly small.

Anyway, in this strategy the Kryb Kingdom is of great importance.
Innumerable blue signs danced wildly inside the Kryb

Kingdom on the plane-space projection map (Ja Fad).
And each of them represents a half-fleet or a squadron unit.
Across the ‘Hania Federation’ from the Skiil Kingdom (Fek Seil) and the Barkzedel Kingdom (Fek Ballzédé) there are many military unit symbols.
They were concentrated at the border, but not so much inside the Kryb Kingdom (Fek Crÿub).

"This is unacceptable." said prime minister (Botsuf) Burash.

"Why? I think this is the best lineup there is." said Armed Forces General Staff Chief (Waloth Ryuazon) and Imperial Field Marshal (Rue Spen) Faramunsh.
"Then, here these forces can serve two missions of capital (Arosh) defense and control of the ‘Hania Federation’."
Faramunsh indicated with his command stick (Greu) the deployed units Kryp, Hania, and Barkzedel.

"Let's try to move."

The unit signs started moving.
The main force was not within the three kingdoms but around the ‘Central Zone’.
Presently, the unit was named 13th Twin Thorns Fleet (

Byr Lobina Bolpel).
It invades the ‘Hania Federation’. And, revolving around the edge of the’Central Zone’ it subdues the ‘People's Sovereign Stellar Union star system’.

Furthermore, in response to the 13th Fleet forces within the three kingdoms are redeployed; troops from the Kryb Kingdom move into the ‘Hania Federation’.
The remaining units of the two kingdoms are almost only for defense, and can only slowly perform an invasion.

"Even if an unexpected situation occurs....."

A new unit symbol appeared within the range of the ‘ Hania Federation’.
To indicate the enemy it was shown in red. In other words, assuming the ‘Hania Federation’ is going to become an enemy.
The red unit symbol begun to move towards the Kryb Kingdom (Fek Crÿub).
But, a bright blue point emerged from the Kryb Kingdom , and quickly blocked the path.
The ‘Hania Federation’ forces, as if unable to avoid the center, cuts off the Kryp Sord (Sord Crÿub) which lies within a solid lineup.

The 13th Fleet will hold down the ‘Hania Federation Army’ by attacking it, and annihilating the (line).

"Measures are possible in this way."

"I understand now, but the ambassador won't approve us to move this way." noted Burash.

"Approve?" Faramunsh asked puzzled. "Is an approval necessary after having moved a military unit?"

"It is not necessary a problem like that. The plan's success rate might fall."

"Then you should have said so." Faramunsh returned a forced smile. "However, why would it fall?"

"Stimulation is too strong."

"What is stimulating?" Faramunsh was wondering, " What's the stimulus?"

"It is stimulation for the anti-Empire faction. Is there something other than that?"

Unless we know with absolute certainty that the ‘Hania Federation’ is unified in the integration with the Empire (Frybar), we have to assume otherwise.
The faction willing to merge seemed to hold the power now.
However, the power base is too unstable.
Saying, that one approves integration, doesn't mean that one has been consulting publicly and receiving support.
They had to proceed with the plan in secrecy.
Naturally, many people are going to rebel when being absorbed by the Empire (Frybar).
Judging by the numbers, this was the majority as the ‘ Hania Federation’ ambassador Tin had admitted.
It just happens to have a very small number of supporters holding the reins of power on the vital organs only.

"Therefore," Burash said. "Exposed movements will create the risk that the alliance faction will hold the power."

"Prime minister (Botsuf), the way you convey is difficult to understand. To what concretely do you refer exposed movements?"

"The concentration of military forces within the Kryb

Kingdom (Fek Crÿub). Currently, the military force in the kingdom is not so much."

"That is because the surrounding is neutral."

"Exactly. The concentration of military forces in here means that we deny the 'Hania Federation' neutrality status.

They are no fools. If this much military force is moved to and around the border, they will surely notice."

"Probably." Faramunsh agreed.
In his review the 'Hania Federation' military was full of flaws, but their intelligence gathering ability was high and valued.

"So the plan is endangered."

The forces which do not approve the integration with the Empire (Frybar) pose two additional problems.
To maintain the status quo, the integrity and neutrality of this (faction), and in accordance with the terms of the Nova Sicily Treaty, the faction will join the 'Three

Nations Alliance'. The alliance factions are small, but when facing the reality of an Empire invasion, the neutral faction could join them. If that happens the combined faction could hold the power.
Burash seems to believe in ambassador Tin's view.

"Is there another plan?" asked Ramaj.

"Certainly, there is." Faramunsh said unexpectedly. " That's the reason my subordinate is a hard worker."

The placement of unit symbols changed drastically on the plane-space projection map (Ja Fad).
The number of symbols within the three Kingdoms was largely reduced.
The forces between the Lasisal Kingdom (Fek Lasieth) and the central region have increased.

"Reinforcing the 13th Fleet?" Ramaj asked.

"No, that is not even enough" Faramunsh lowered his head.
"The 1st Twin Thorns Fleet (Byr Kasna Bolpel) and the 15th Fleet (Byr Roreuna) will advance to the front.
A new Fleet must be organized from (reserve) forces

from the 11th, the 12th, and the 13th. And the 14th Fleet has to be moved into the combat zone.
This is in order to launch everything from the 11th to the 14th Fleet toward the ‘Hania Federation’."

"A large-scale military power reinforcement." said Burash.

"Yes. However, in this area, our forces are still engaging/ battling the ‘United Mankind’.
Furthermore, there is the ‘Greater Alkont Republic’, another enemy nation.
Nobody will be surprised if we concentrate our forces there.
We are after all, famous for excessive use of military power."

"If it's like this it shouldn't be a problem." Burash said relieved.

"Most likely."

"However, Faramunsh" Ramaj added. "This line-up won't it take a lot of time?"

"So it is." Faramunsh agreed. "In this plan the invasion

does not come from the Kryb Kingdom (Fek Crÿub).
The military forces within the Kingdom will remain as is, and be prepared in the unlikely event of an invasion by the 'Hania Federation'.
Therefore, this Fleet must single-handedly acquire control of the 'Hania Federation'."

The bright point is moved.

Unlike before, the symbols within the Kryb Kingdom (Fek Crÿub) did not move.
They remain at the border line.
Instead, the four Fleets from the Twin Thorns Fleet (Byr Borpel) are divided into two groups, and surrounded the Kryb Kingdom (Fek Crÿub).
As the new organized Fleet takes over the original mission, its huge military size limits the invasion routes, and charges the time required.

"This is troublesome." said Burash. "If it takes that much more time ....."

"The alliance faction will gain influence?" Faramunsh said in a tone of ridicule.

"Restrain yourself, Faramunsh." Ramaj growled at him.
"I expect my Vassals to treat each other with respect."

"I will abide by your wish." Faramunsh showed his remorse.

"It is as Armed Forces General Staff Chief (Waloth Ryuazon) said." at least on the surface, Burash seemed not offended.
"Isn't there a plan to finish the capture quickly?"

"Then, this is the third proposal."

A new plane-space projection map (Ja Fad) is displayed, but there were very few changes.

"It seems to be the same as before." Burash furrowed his eyebrows and starred at the plane-space projection map (Ja Fad).

"That is correct. However, the movement is different." said Faramunsh.
"This plan can complete the capture with little difference in the time frame to the first plan."

A military unit symbol began to move.

The four Fleets from the Twin Thorns (Bolpel) are divided into two groups, and cut into/off the ‘Hania Federation’.
Simultaneously, forces from the Kryb Kingdom (Fek Crÿub) started to invade while forces from the Skiil Kingdom fill in between.

"There is absolutely no problem with this." Burash commented.

A slight tone of criticism could be heard. If the plan has been proposed first, then it would have been alright.

"No, there is a problem." Faramunsh insisted.
"The military forces within the Kryb Kingdom (Fek Crÿub) have been devoted to security.
Now, the capital (Arosh) defense will be weakened. In particular, the ‘Central Zone’ will be almost empty at an early stage of the operation.
The ‘Hania Federation’ will quickly fill in and take control. The safety of the Capital cannot be guaranteed due to the lack of overwhelming forces."

"Can you not gather military forces from other Kingdoms in Lakfakalle?"

"Even if we do as much as possible, it still will be like this ." Faramunsh explained.
"Except for the Kryb Kingdom (Fek Crÿub) the remaining seven Kingdoms are still fighting the enemy.
The number of Fleets which can be pulled back is limited. "

"It isn't enough?" Ramaj sighed heavily.

"Regrettably." Faramunsh answered.
"As Armed Forces General Staff Chief, I think it may be better for now to keep this strategy in mind and leave it as a vision."

"Really?" Ramaj placed her chin on the back of her hand, and looked at the plane-space projection map (Ja Fad).
"This lineup is certainly dangerous."

"Is that so?" Burash said. "I think it's not very different from the first plan."

"This time the ‘Hania Federation’ will recall the treaty it once signed." said Faramunsh.

A bright red point appeared and began to move toward the Kryp Sord.
There were not many bright blue points remaining in the Kryb Kingdom (Fek Crÿub). The bright red point was able to avoid the bright blue point.
Or it would defeat the other, and easily invade the Empire. After that there would be no one left to stop it.

"Thus, if the ‘Hania Federation’ still turns on the Kryp Sord (Sord Crÿub) they will create an inroad into our own territory.
When they rush in, perhaps, it cannot be prevented." Faramunsh informed.
"That means Lakfakalle will fall to the enemy at that time ."

"Are you saying that it cannot be protected?" Ramaj tried to confirm.

"I don't know. Enemy troop strength was too vague. However, assuming the worst case, pulling military forces from various quarters won't make it in time, and the Capital defense won't hold."

"This is very pessimistic." Burash answered.

"Someone commanding the military, by all means, should be a pessimist."

"I am not familiar in military affairs, but if the ‘Hania Federation’ attempts to capture the capital (Arosh) would they really sacrifice the majority of their own territory?"

"Yes", Faramunsh nodded.

"That cannot be." Burash asserted firmly.
"No, forgive my impoliteness. However, judging from their way of thinking they wouldn't do this kind of thing. After all, what advantage would they get from this?"

"That is not what I take into consideration. I am only showing what is militarily possible."

"Even if it's militarily possible, it can be impossible politically."

"Only when there is a political reason would the ‘Hania

Federation' occupy the capital (Arosh)?"

"Not at all. Even temporarily no one would do something like surrender his own star system. That's what I meant to say."

"If so, it would be good."

"Certainly." asserted the prime minister (Botsuf).

"However, would it be unthinkable if the alliance faction causes a revolt?
Even if they sat around with their arms crossed, all the territories will be seized anyway.
If that's the case, then they might think about taking over the capital of the enemy they should hate."

"Even so, can we recapture it immediately?"

"How will that be possible?"

"But, there," Burash points at the Twin Thorns Fleet. "
Isn't there enough military power?
Is it not enough to recapture the Capital?"

"Enemy troop strength is too ambiguous. Therefore, I do not know.
And, I'm also concerned about the 'Three Nations Alliance' trend.
In this prospect, they could cooperate making the situation more chaotic."

Burash remained silent.

"How about, we wait for now for the troop strength to increase?" Faramunsh said hurriedly.
"The bottom line is to have similar military power in Lakfakalle as are deployed in the Kryb Kingdom (Fek Crÿub).
Although, that much military power is needed, it doesn't require much time to arrange it."

"Armed Forces General Staff Chief (Waloth Ryuazon)" Burash said.
"When will it be?"

"As it is. It will probably be about five years? Aside from warships, the personnel are rather scarce and insufficient ."

Burash had a blank face. "Then the opportunity is lost."

"Someday, the opportunity will come again.
However, should the capital (Arosh) be lost we won't be able to recover it."

"Will it be so? We may not be able to recover the capital (Arosh) after losing it, but it is a question of when we will be back."

"If it doesn't happen then that's all there is. This situation came unexpectedly in the first place. Shouldn't I think it to have been like this from the beginning?"

Obviously, the prime minister (Botsuf) didn't approve the opinion easily.

"Armed Forces General Staff Chief (Waloth Ryuazon)" the prime minister indicated around the border of the ‘ United Mankind’ and the ‘People's Sovereign Stellar Union star system’.
This area had 20 active Fleets from the Twin Thorns Fleet .
"I heard that the war situation in this area was completed . Can you not extract military forces from here?"

"Of course, it is the strategy plan on having it extracted."

"But.....it is too little." still not giving up yet, Burash pressed on.

"You should understand that we cannot divert everything."

"I am aware of that, but isn't it too little after all?"

"Actually, there is an issue I'm concerned about."

"What about it?"

"The strategy of this area is to intercept traffic between the ‘United Mankind’ and the ‘People's Sovereign Stellar Union star system’."

"Yes, I am aware of that."

"Naturally, we expect the ‘United Mankind’ to come out with a Fleet."

"Hostilities, I have those reports."

"Yes. However, the military forces were much smaller than predicted. The forces we fought with were almost exclusively from the ‘People's Sovereign Stellar Union star system’.
We believe, the ‘United Mankind’ is hiding a Fleet somewhere. We must be prepared for them."

"Forgive me." Burash said discretely while pointing out. " Isn't it common to make a wrong prediction?"

"Yes. So it is." Faramunsh said simply. "It is not unusual for a prediction to be off.
On the other hand, perhaps the one which hits is more unusual.
Even in retrospect, there are predictions where you don't know where the mistake was made.
However, as long as a prediction is still a prediction, the result is still unknown at this stage; we must treat it as if it is right."

"You are cautious, Armed Forces General Staff Chief (Waloth Ryuazon)." with a subtle tone of sarcasm.

"Yes." Faramunsh smiled. "The war probably won't end until I retire from my responsibilities.
My mission is, if possible, to let my successor take over in

a comfortable situation.
Therefore, I must be more careful than someone walking on a tightrope under high gravity."

"Do you think you are able to bring the war to an end within your generation?" Burash challenged.

Oh, yes — Ramaj thought — *wouldn't this person want to become the prime minister (Botsuf) of a nation of a unified humanity?*

The desire for fame is not unpleasant at all. But I am worried whether the desire had not clouded his eyes.
Ramaj smiled (at the thought) —— she didn't have different personal affairs.
I also wanted to declare before crown prince (Kilugia) Dusanyu that mankind has been forever liberated from the war
.
Fortunately, the two vassals hadn't noticed Ramaj's smile
.

"I'm just taking care of the issue at hand. Your Majesty (Erumiton) makes the decisions." Faramunsh said.

"You are right." Ramaj still had her chin on her hand. "I'm

now considering whether to put the capital (Arosh) on a bet."

"Shouldn't it be the Empire (Frybar)?" Faramunsh asked.

"The importance is the same."

The ‘City of Eight Gates (Birot Gasordal)’ Lakfakalle. The capital (Arosh) has eight gates which connects the eight Kingdoms.
The Empire (Frybar) cannot function if there is no Lakfakalle.
The huge Empire was without equal in the history of mankind, and had a city-state to match. This character had to have a certain meaning.

"As you say."

"Your Majesty (Erumiton)." Burash said.
"Please consider that on the other side of the bet is the ‘ Hania Federation’."

"The ‘Hania Federation’ is the object of the bet, there is no need to think about it.
The capital (Arosh) can never match the ‘Hania

Federation’."

"But, Your Majesty (Erumiton)....." Burash was going to say something.

"We are betting with the lives of army officer (Bosnal)." Ramaj said.
"That is why I am troubled."

The Empire (Frybar) had already taken considerable territories from the ‘United Mankind’.
If the ‘Hania Federation’ is added the Empire will control two-thirds of humanity.
It takes time, but transforming the economic power of the new territories into military power doesn't yield much.

Even without what Burash called "political effect" the war will end sooner than expected.
Naturally, the number of deaths will be less.

The lives that should have been lost, are they worth enough to bet the capital (Arosh)?

"Your Majesty (Erumiton)" Burash said. "What Armed Forces General Staff Chief said is the worst case.
Perhaps, it will not happen as I was trying to say some

time ago.
The ‘Hania Federation’ national policy will not permit such a situation."

"I have a different opinion." stated Faramunsh.
"No, the worst is conformity, sometimes there is the phenomenon; in order to come closer things are moved even further towards the worst."

"Are you saying that the ambassador's words can't be trusted?" Burash asked.
"At present, this very same ambassador holds an important position of power. Furthermore, he also hoped for the prosperity of the people under the Empire (Frybar)."

"Prime minister (Botsuf), you are trusting him just like that?" Faramunsh said it in a scolding manner.

"In a way there was proof, Armed Forces General Staff Chief (Waloth Ryuazon)." Burash said.
"Even we are collecting our own information about the ‘ Hania Federation’.
Therefore, as has been determined, what ambassador Tin said about the situation is correct."

"I see."

"I would never delegate the ambassador's word as trusting." he said with wounded pride.
"Have the military command headquarters (Ryuazornyu) analysis produced a different result?"

"No, the political situation in other countries does not concern us.
It is good to do this as practice substitute in spare times, but my subordinates now tend to work overtime even if there is no work."

"Then, why the suspicion?" Burash interrogated.

"Does doubt need any reason?" said Faramunsh amused.
"I have lived my life repeatedly doubting/in continuous doubt of everything.
In the Empire (Frybar), without a good personality one wouldn't be able to fulfill the position of Armed Forces General Staff Chief (Waloth Ryuazon).
When I was appointed to my position, it was a terribly regrettable thing, but I've recently started to reluctantly think that it might have been a suitable calling.

Even now there still remain a handful of doubts in my heart."

Ramaj cut in. "In what way doubtful? Explain it a little more clearly now."

"I didn't believe when it seemed that the ambassador was trying to use our troops for an internal fight." Faramunsh said.
"Our work is not to investigate the internal situation of a foreign country, but we discern in common sense.
In that country, someone competing for a position of power is risking one's life.
Won't the ambassador and his associates be because they have been defeated to that?"

"I feel the same fear." Ramaj agreed.

"Your Majesty (Erumiton)!" Burash said shocked by that.

"But even so, it doesn't mean I don't trust thy judgment." said Ramaj to Burash.
"As with the ambassador and his associates, now is the opportunity for the Empire (Frybar)."

"It sure is, Your Majesty (Erumiton)." Burash bowed. "

Armed Forces General Staff Chief (Waloth Ryuazon) indeed had told some truthful facts.
There is a lot of power struggle within the ‘Hania Federation’, and ambassador Tin belongs to the faction losing power.
If they lose this time the opposition group will seize the power.

In this case, it will be (reason) enough to consider that the ‘Three Nations Alliance’ has become the ‘Four Nations Alliance’.
The ambassador and his associates are holding power, and are losing power. These facts don't completely contradict each other."

"The ‘Four Nations Alliance’ would be easier for us, I hope." Faramunsh said.
"This is the reason we always take the circumstances into consideration when formulating a strategy."

"Is it that easier to do?" Ramaj asked.
She didn't forget Faramunsh's cherished opinion that the ‘Hania Federation’ was easier to dealt with as an enemy than annexing it.

"Yes."

"But the war will be prolonged."

"Yes, Your Majesty (Erumiton)." Faramunsh admitted. "
There is a difference with the preparedness of an enemy in a neutral country.
If our military power is put into defense, it will take a lot of time to complete the maneuvers.
Of course, it takes even more time to consume the 'Hania Federation'."

"Furthermore, the number of dead people will increase."

"This is for attaining lasting peace for the descendants."

"But" Burash said "Although, you can buy it cheap you don't necessary have to buy at a high price."

"Therefore, this is a bet."

"Even if it's a lost, in the end this bet could be more rewarding." Burash was able to add.

"Thy opinion had been heard enough." Ramaj said.

"I shall make the decision now."

"Isn't it better not to hurry and force a bad decision?" Faramunsh said.

"No. The decision won't be too quick." Burash said.

"Faramunsh." Ramaj said. "Rearrange all the fronts and organize a new Fleet.
The Fleet name will be decided later. Part of the Twin Thorns Fleet(Byr Borpel) will also bear the new Fleet name."

"I accept your Imperial Order." Faramunsh lowered his head.

"Burash, in any discussion with the ambassador and his associates who desire to ask about more information about the treatment of their people, you may (in return) request the disclosure of necessary information for us."

"As the Empress commands." Burash also bowed.

"I hope, Faramunsh. You do understand you must carry it out quickly."

"I understand. May I ask you to grant me a month?"

"Are that many days needed to begin the strategy?"

"Yes."

"Might be good." Ramaj nodded. *I considered Faramunsh to be the dull man who did not use tactics.*
He said he needed one month. If so, it probably will be.
There is no gain in rushing it.

"Thank you for your kindness. Preparations for the operation can have serious influence on management flexibility. Will that be alright?"

I'm accustomed to how Faramunsh is saying a threat. "There's no good or bad.
Proceed with the order. It is probably needless to say, but you have to pay maximum attention to information leaks ."

"I am familiar with that." Faramunsh said. "I also have one more Imperial Order that I must be granted."

Ramaj understood him. "Is it a matter regarding the

Commander?"

"Yes. For the seriousness and scale of the operation I think His Imperial Highness the Crown Prince (Feia Kirugel) might be suitable."

"That person was already given a duty." Ramaj said.
I already considered about this matter, and have a conclusion.
"Further, if we lose this bet, we must have that person in this neighborhood."
The crown prince was Imperial Fleet Commander in Chief (Glaharerl Rue Byrar) Dusanyu and Twin Thorns Fleet Commander in Chief (Glaharerl Byrar Bolpel).
As the Twin Thorns Fleet was accomplishing a strategy in two far reaching directions, the flagship (Glaga) ' Sankau' has been anchored in the capital (Arosh) Lakfakalle.

"Vice Commander in Chief (Roiglaharerl) Kotoponi will be good. It is the commander of that area. I already gave her an implicit secret order."

"I see." Faramunsh said calmly, but had his fingertips at his blue-gray braided hair.
As a result of a long acquaintance, Ramaj knew it was his

habit when he felt offended.

"Do not be angry, Faramunsh" Ramaj soothed. "I did not decide to invade the ‘Hania Federation’ beforehand.

"There is no anger."

"Then it will do. I entrust thou with the choice of the commander for the Kryb Kingdom (Fek Crÿub)."

"Understood."

Chapter 8: Inbound Piercing Arrow

"Attention, this is the Captain (Salerl)" Lafiel broadcasted inside the warship.
"As announced earlier, the ship will be entering into a super high-acceleration of eight hours.
Four hours later we will have normal acceleration for 15 minutes as a break, but until then it is vital to stay in your seats.[will be life threathening to leave your seats]
The acceleration alarm claxon (Duniit) had been sounded a minute ago. There is a delay of 10 minutes until then. It is better to finish up your business before it's too late."

Two auxiliary engines have been installed to the port and starport side of the attack ship (Sopaïc) "Flicaubh". They are simple machines which can only provide thrust. They increase the basic thrust of the "Flicaubh", which will drive the attack ship to its final acceleration design limit.
The gravity control system (Wameria) cannot neutralize all of the high-acceleration.
Just like astronauts in ancient times without the gravity control system, the crew-members did not like to be held down by the acceleration.

Of course the "Flicaubh" was not the only ship being forced to this penance.
All ships from the 1st Devastation Squadron (Sov Direr Kasna) have been schedule to go into highspeed.

"One minute before high acceleration commences." reported Gurinshia.

Lafiel sounded the alarm claxon (Duniit).

"All hands, take a seat." Ekuryua was extremely businesslike in her function as executive officer.
"Check your safety belts."

"Chief engineer(Bynkerl), start countdown 30 seconds before." Lafiel ordered.

"Aye." Gurinshia answered.

The seats transformed from a chair to a bed configuration. The beds opposed the pseudo-gravity,

allowing them to endure the force.

"30 seconds to go. Starting countdown. 25, 24, 23....." Gurinshia's voice spread through the entire warship.

"All hands, confirm your seats." Jinto said.

Even if there was a fool who was running around, he wouldn't be doing it for long.

"Adjust gravity control system (Wameria) to high acceleration procedure." Lafiel ordered.

"Aye." Jinto answered. "Switching to high acceleration adjustment successful."

The artificial gravity disappeared.

"..... Five, four, three, two, one, commencing acceleration!"

The "Flicaubh" was enveloped by a powerful and strange vibration.

On initiation of the acceleration procedure, the gravity control system (Wameria) turned its full power towards the bow, against the pseudo-gravity.
However, acceleration went beyond it. The remaining force of acceleration, 10 standard gravity (Demon), pressed the crew-members tightly down into their seats. Unlike the Abh who are accustomed to gravity changes, it will be tough for people from a land world (Nahen). As nothing can be done during full acceleration, the crew had been permitted to go to bed, but perhaps it would be a painful sleep. Many people will have nightmares.
Orbital arsenals and satellites were orbiting the planet Akaddo. The largest ones were warship shipyards, which are the objectives of the 1st Devastation Squadron (Sov Direr Kasna).

The attack ships were to accelerate to a velocity of 0.02 of the speed of light, and destroy the target with the electromagnetic projectile cannons (Irgyuf).
This was a very simple operation.
Of course, the Fleet will be detected from far away.
Naturally, the enemy will try to intercept and in order to thwart the attack.
Therefore, the assault ship (Gairh) from the advance force will act as the main force, and will close in on the orbital shipyards to engage enemy ships.
The 1st Devastation Squadron will be the arrow which is shot into the battle. The sharpness of the arrow would decide whether this strategy was a success or not.

"Auxiliary engines are working normally." reported Gurinshia.

However, this was obvious without such a report.
Landers will probably notice this acceleration and the vibration (even) without the spatial-sensor organ (Frosh).
In order to lighten the burden on Arbof during the high acceleration, the flight staff officer (Lodairl Garerl) will take turns at the helm.
And, Lafiel got the first turn.

It was a boring flight where it only goes straight, but it was not so for Lafiel who hasn't flown a ship in a long time.
In spite of the danger of the mission, which was close at hand, Lafiel was excited.
But soon, she became sorrowful.
This acceleration was very mild for the Abh. To enjoy the acceleration it would have to be more intense.
If you have to put up with the pain of breathing with broken ribs, and feeling as if you are wearing a lump of neutrons, that would deserve to be called high acceleration.

She felt uneasy, and wondered if her sense of flying had probably become dull.
It was the result of her spending her valuable long vacation with Jinto on land world (Nahen).
She was regretting it, but she decided to think forward.
Because it was such a significant experience, she did not have to regret it. In addition, there will be many opportunities from now on to steer a ship.

Jinto soon could not bear the load.
Compared to a land world (Nahen), one's own weight

had become five times as much.
What was more troublesome was that his bones and muscles had been adapted to Abh standard gravity (Demon), and appeared to have made him weaker.

The control console (Kuro) display surface rose and placed itself before his eyes.
While remembering that the facial skin was stretching, he inspected the condition of all displayed crew-members.
There was no particular problem.
It seemed everyone properly settled down in their seats.
Assuming, if there was even a person who didn't manage to be seated, Jinto wouldn't be able to do anything about it.
He looked back over his shoulder. There was a door far below. I will fall down the moment I roll just a bit to the side.

If it were under standard gravity (Demon) it would not hurt from this height, but now it would be a blessing to come off without a bone fracture.

There should have been some crew members(Sash) who slept in higher places.
Though, they should have been accustomed to it. As a Kalique (Karik) does not have a gravity control system (Wameria), moving under such acceleration is essential. When sitting down in the front row, it will become a predicament which equals a height of a 10 stores building.
Normal acceleration of a Kalique was 4 standard gravity (Demon), therefore, this high acceleration will indeed be a new experience.

He was not able to go to sleep - so Jinto had decided to be ready.
The crew's health was the responsibility of the ship's clerk (Wiig).
In other words, it was Jinto's work on the "Flicaubh".
Right now, there was no report of abnormalities from anyone.
The life signs of the crew-members on the display of the control console appeared normal.

Suddenly, Jinto felt nostalgic.
This reminds me of the time I spent a short trip with Lafiel on the "Goslauth".
To be exact, it was the second time, but it was subjectively the first time that day Jinto came into the world of the Abh.
I was carefree then, Jinto thought. There was uncertainty in the new world, but he didn't think of death.

It was possible to escape the fear of sudden death temporarily if he threw away his court rank (Sune), and abandon his military duty.
However, Jinto had no intention of doing that.
In comparison there was one good thing that came out from boarding the "Goslauth". Currently, Jinto was not worried about the future.
Already, he cannot live any other way than as Abh nobility (Bar Sif).
There was no other place to be.

Ekuryua felt nostalgic for the old days again while dozing off.
Her turn did not come yet, but her connection chain (

Kiseg) was already connected to the control console. The scenery from outside the warship streamed into her spatial-sensor organ.
It was not unusual for an Abh as Ekuryua wasn't born in Lakfakalle. She was born on a trade ship.
According to records, she was born during a flight which was underway in plane-space (Fath) in the Barke Kingdom (Fek Barkal), but of course she didn't have any recollection, and she could not care less.
As an Abh her father was probably an eccentric person. Espescially because only a few humans would bring an artificial womb (Janyu) aboard a trade ship.

Her father was whimsical, and doted upon her young self. But when five years had passed, he seemed to have grown tired of parenting, and sent her to the orbital residence (Garish) in Lakfakalle where the whole family lived in with one cat.
So, she lived aboard a trade ship until she was five years old.
Until then, the number of humans she met was limited. Her father and several cats were all there was in her world.

"Navigator (Rilbiga)." she heard the Captain (Salerl) voice. "It's your turn. Take over the helm."

For a moment, Ekuryua's consciousness was at the boundary between dream and reality.

"Do you hear me, Ekuryua?" asked Lafiel. She was worried.

"Aye." Ekuryua answered.

"If you feel sick, I could do a little longer, would that be alright?" this time rather than being worried, her tone was like not expecting anything.

"That is not necessary."
She inserted her hand into the control glove (Gooheik). The arm was a little heavy, but it was not a problem.
"Captain (Salerl). I'm ready to take over."

"Alright." a subtle voice mixed with disappointment. " It's all yours."

Thank you, Your Highness. She said only in her mind.

Whatever the warship sensed was streamed through her spatial-sense into her brain.

She felt the sister-ships around.
Occasionally, the trade ship Ekuryua was on flew alongside other ships.
At such times, her father would always let her sit in the co-pilot's seat and let her feel the outside through her spatial-sense.
"It's a competition." It seemed as if she could hear her father saying. "Daddy will win."
The competition was far from exciting. The ship appeared to be flying almost in parallel before gradually falling behind.
The reason was probably because the acceleration performance was not so much different.
Even now it was no different. No, it was perhabs more trivial.

The acceleration performance of the sister-ships were the same. They were the same type of warship, of course. Therefore, the relative position to each other did not change as if they were connected by an invisible stick. Suddenly one ship fell behind. It was the "Krolcaubh".

""Krolcaubh", what's going on?" the Commander (Leshiek) voice could be heard.

"Output of the second auxiliary engine is unstable." answered the flight officer (Lodair) of the "Krolcaubh".

""Krolcaubh", Captain (Salerl)." Atosuryua called.

"Yes, here is Vice Hecto-Commander (Roibomowas) Bomdel."

"Can you maintain the current output?"

"I don't know."
A moment of silence fell.

"Understood, "Krolcaubh". You may withdraw."

"But, Commander." the Captain (Salerl) of the "Krolcaubh" refuted. "There are no abnormalities with the warship itself. And the other auxiliary engine is all right."

"That is not enough. You realize that, don't you?"

"......Roger. May you have fortunes of war."

"Thank you, "Krolcaubh". And, we will meet again afterwards."

In Ekuryua's spatial-sense the "Krolcaubh" was falling behind. No, perhaps one had fallen was more correct.
It seemed to have stopped accelerating, and suddenly fell quickly behind. It was already far behind.

When he won the competition, my father would always sing a song. It was mostly improvised.
She liked many kinds of songs, but without any exceptions she liked her father's songs.
Ekuryua wanted to sing a song to herself, but stopped although she had already composed the lyrics in her mind.
A very good song was made. But she recognized herself that perhaps other people won't be able to understand just a little.
Her father's song had a bad reputation even among the whole Ekuryua family relatives.
It appeared only she inherited the sensitivity to recognize the beauty of her father's songs.
Therefore, Ekuryua Üémh Tlyzr Naurh's songs could no longer be properly evaluated by no one other than herself.

Gnombosh was tense.
Although temporary, he was steering a warship instead of a Kalique. He did it in the military officer academy (Kenru Lodairl), and even after becoming an officer trainee (Bene Lodairl) he had done it many times.

But this was real combat.

"Messenger (Kleria), are you awake?" Yatesh had been waiting for an answer.

It was time to hand over the steering to the next person .

"Yes." Gnombosh reacted immediately.

"Will you be all right?" Yatesh was insecure.

"Yes. I will be all right."

"Pull yourself together, Line Wing Officer (Fektodai). Your job is to keep it straight.
Don't try anything funny now, even if it's the original destination."

"I understand."

"Good. Hang in there."

"I will do my best." the connection chain (Kiseg) and the control glove (Gooheik) had long since been prepared . "I'm good to go anytime.
Please, let me steer the ship."

"I already turned it over."

"Oh……, Yes."
Gnombosh felt the temptation to move the fingers on his left-hand. Of course, if he were to do so it would bring the large ship off course.
He could sense a group of warships ahead.
That was an advance unit of patrol warships (Résic).
As the 1st Devastation Squadron (Sov Direr Kasna) fire power was insufficient, the patrol warships have also been assigned for this operation.

The unnecessary mines (Hoksath) for this operation have been unloaded, but the patrol warship's mass was still larger than the attack ship which gave it an inferior acceleration performance.
Compared to the attack ship its current structure was weaker, and won't tolerate the acceleration as the 1st Devastation Squadron would. Therefore, they departed first.
They had to catch up by the time the operation begins to strike. If the attack is not carried out simultaneously then the effect will be reduced to half.

Gnombosh took a big breath.
We must keep climbing up there.
For that, I mustn't rush.
I didn't do efforts for nothing, he thought, Gnombosh almost burst into laughter.
He noticed that he may have been lost his mind.
The Line Wing Officer (Fektodai) felt himself stiffening.

"The auxiliary engines have stopped. Commencing separation." Gurinshia said.

"Acknowledged." Lafiel answered.

The auxiliary engines which had exhausted fuel and propellant had separated. But their role had not ended yet.
According to the law of inertia, they kept going towards their low-priority objective.
Perhaps, they will be intercepted on the way, but that is their additional purpose.
If they hit, even if inflicting/causing slight damage, it's a gain.
Perhaps, someone devising the strategy in the General Staff, who loves harassment, doesn't know how to sit back and enjoy life.

And the separated attack ship continues the acceleration under its own power.
The artificial gravity was back towards the floor.
With that the seats also returned to their original shape.

Jinto's sigh was audible. As someone from a land world (Nahen) he relaxed.

"There are no abnormalities." Also from a land world (Nahen), Gurinshia was relaxing.

"We will be arriving in position for the bombardment in 30 minutes as planned." Added Ekuryua.

Everything was favorable.

Lafiel had left her body [to the breach of trust] and concentrated on the information which flew into the spatial-sensor organ.

When being at high-velocity, she knew the hydrogen floating in outer space would cling onto the warship body like in the atmosphere.

She became uneasy. It was different from the acceleration and the deceleration of their ancestors; the current Abh avoid these instantly with plane-space (Fath).
It was rare for the already soft/degenerate Abh to

accelerate to such velocities. It was at least a new experience for her.

"Attention, this is the Captain (Salerl)." She shook off the uneasiness and turned to the crewmen.
"The ship will shortly commence the attack to destroy the enemy warship shipyard. The return won't be in such a hurry, that should put your mind at ease."

"25 minutes till we enter firing range." said Ekuryua

"Arbof, watch out for enemy warships." Lafiel ordered.

"Understood."

From a distance any movements should have been sensed.
Actually, the enemy was about to commence interception action.
However, allies have kept the enemy ships far from the course of the 1st Devastation Squadron.
Ahead, the patrol warship forces immediately went in. It seemed like wiping the dew.
Beyond the other side was the goal, the enemy warship shipyard.
Of course, it was not defenseless. The shipyard had also defensive firepower.

The 〈People's Sovereign Stellar Union star system favorite use of the laser cannon (Voklanyu) in particular, is a threat.
It is more powerful than the main battery of an assault ship, which will easily fall when taking a direct hit.
Fortunately, allies have deployed a reflective cloud (Sebyl Kela). The reflective cloud will disperse the laser beam fire(Klanraj).
As some density is required, it is useless for a Fleet where allies and enemies change position excessively, but in this battle where the target and the course are fixed it is effective.

The reflective cloud was shining mysteriously.
However, the reflective cloud does not protect from all of the laser beam.
After all, the reduced power of the laser beam coming through the mist was still dangerous.
"Preparations for evasion granted." Atosuryua gave the order extra down.

"Arbof!" Lafiel ordered in response. "Prepare evasive maneuver, radius 500."

"Understood."

Arbof fired the attitude control engine a little at a time in order not to change the course.

"Captain (Salerl), incoming heavy enemy missile fire, coming toward us!" Yatesh said.

"Gnombosh" Lafiel called out to the messenger (Kleria) . "Today, I will leave the gun turrets in your care.
Pay only attention to those at the front is fine. You cannot catch up with the ones passing by anyway".

"I understand." Gnombosh grabbed the control console .

"Bombardment starts in 10 minutes." Reported Ekuryua.

In front, one of the patrol warships turned into a fireball. The growing lump of plasma mass was passed by immediately to the rear.
The gun turrets discharged light (lances).
An enemy missile exploded, and filled the persistant darkness with color.

"Bombardment starts in 5 minutes."

"So far, no damage." said Gurinshia.

The patrol warship units were gradually approached. When they are lined up with them the attack starts. Until then they had to hold out.

"Coming in contact with the reflective cloud (Sebyl Kela)." Ekuryua informed.

The rushing body of the warship was scorched by the frictional heat of the reflective cloud.
If the fog is passed through, which had been protecting the body from the laser beam, only evasion is left for protection. Closing the distance becomes more difficult. An enemy missile passed by the 〈Flicaubh. However, as the relative velocity was extremely high, if it missed, there was no worry they would be pursuited.

"Messenger (Kleria)" Arbof went on.
"You have to priortize and shoot down enemy missiles that are likely to hit. Because the space is limited it is hard to maneuver here."

"Yes. I'll try." Gnombosh replied with no confidence.

"Say it with more confidence." Yatesh advised. " Because when you fail, we all die (anyway)."

"Yes." Gnombosh's eyes also looked tense.

Lafiel found an opportunity to say something, but gave it up. It was not important, and it was a good experience for Gnombosh.
When she herself was Line Wing Officer (Fektodai), she was submitted to harder and heavier pressure on the mind.

The attitude control engine of the warship puffed frequently.

Lafiel's palms were sweating damply.

The shadow of the enemy installation grew bigger in her spatial-sense, and the stern of the patrol warships came within hand's reach.

"Bombardment starts in 1 minute." said Ekuryua.

"Everyone, do you read?" Atosuryua's form appeared on the screen.

"One vessel dropped out, but there is no change in the order. The attack starts in about 1 minute.
The countdown starts 30 seconds before, adjust so that we will attack together."

"Thou were heard clearly." Lafiel stood up to warn everyone inside the warship.
"All hands, prepare the electromagnetic projectile cannon (Irgyuf) for salvo fire!"

The alarm claxon (Duniit) sounded off.

"Arbof, it is better you concentrate on steering." Lafiel ordered. "Gnombosh, thou shall prepare the bombardment."

"Aye!" the Line Wing Officer (Fektodai) answered in a high-pitched voice. "Loading completed. Safety off. Ready for bombardment."

"Internal warship systems all normal." said Gurinshia.

"No abnormality in the internal environment inside the ship. All is a combat-ready." Jinto reported.

"Bombardment starts in 30 seconds. 29, 28, 27, ..." the voice of the flight officer (Lodair) from the squadron headquarters (Glagaf Sov) echoed.

"Arbof, the bearing?" Lafiel confirmed.

"To miss such a big mark is difficult. There is no problem. "

The warship shipyard was huge. Hundreds of secondary production tubes were connected to the main production line of the bulbous plant.
〈Flicaubh's specified target was a globe which was regarded as an antimatter fuel tank factory.
Even the globe had a diameter of 2700 WesDagh.
At last, they lined up with the fleet of patrol warships.

Simultaneously, Atosuryua took command. " Commence bombardment!"

"Fire!" Lafiel ordered.

The bows of 〈Flicaubh's electromagnetic projectile cannon (Irgyuf) barked in unision.
The electromagnetic projectile cannon (Irgyuf) kept shooting cylindric fusion warhead (Spyut) which are

loaded at the end.
The 1st Devastation Squadron (Sov Direr Kasna) and the patrol warship forces jointly launched their fusion warheads towards the enemy arsenal at relative velocities.
Sprees of fire shot from the naval laser cannon (Voklanyu) of the warship shipyard, but defense was impossible. Almost all fusion warhead (Spyut) were absorbed up by the arsenal.

A huge structure like this becomes an easy target.
The antimatter fuel tank factory's structure could not contain the internal explosion, burst ugly, and fell off the main production tube.
The form was like an overripe pomegranate. It can no longer function as the plant it should be. And perhaps all the humans died.
The other sections of the yard were similar too. It was twisted, torn off, teared to pieces, and was exposing its paled and miserable form.

"Bombardment completed." Declared Atosuryua. "All warships, change to shelter action!"

Suddenly, a fragment in space, too huge to call it a piece, floated by the 〈Flicaubh.
One patrol warship made a steering mistake and crashed into the fragment

I hate to die at the last moment, Lafiel thought to herself.
Of course, everyone was probably thinking the same.

Arbof was wiping a sweat.
It was hard to say anything in this understandably tense atmosphere.

In less than a minute, they passed through the space of death, but there was still no relief yet.
The warship shipyard attack forces were planning to use the planet Akaddo's gravitational force for braking.
And, other than various arsenals, there were several small and large mobile fortresses in orbit around Akaddo .
Their welcomes must be received from now on.

Lafiel examined intel of the battle situation.

The formation of the warship shipyard attack forces have been broken. They would like to reform a proper formation, but the situation would not permit it.
There are sister ships around, but they had to act independently until gravity braking was over before gathering.

Lafiel's mind was in an uproar, the spatial-sensor organ (Frosh) clarified her thoughts.
She applied various variables into the four-dimensional space-time which she envisioned in her mind and explored the best course.
If too far from the planet, the gravitional effect would be insufficient. If too close, they would burn out in the thick atmosphere. She had to ascertain a last-minute course. It will have to be done in a hurry, too.
Lafiel finished calculating a course.

"Arbof, fire two volleys at the 101st enemy fortress."

"Aye, commencing fire."

The 101st was an ID number that the Star Force (Laburéc) had assigned. The enemy calls it by another name, but Lafiel didn't know its name, and didn't think she will ever either.

Anyway, firing the two volleys at the 101st fortress was done.
It was just suppression fire.
Without checking for target hits, Lafiel gave the next order.
When the course she decided on was sent to Arbof, " Begin deceleration with maximum power."

"Aye!"

〈Flicaubh made a quick half-turn and turned around then began to decelerate at full power. That way it kept rushing toward the planet Akaddo.
It will dive under the mobile fortress group. But for some reason or another like leper's disease there is no helping it.
The 101st enemy fortress was safe. But, it seemed not to be able to afford to pay attention to the hostile craft which passed below its eyes.
Lafiel thought the same thing like the other Captain (Salerl), because it was pouring tens of fusion warhead (Spyut) elsewhere.

"Data concatenation(Lonjhoth Rirrag) has stopped." reported Yatesh.

It was a phenomenon which sometimes happened when being wrapped in the atmosphere which ionizes.

"No reason for concern." Lafiel said aloud.
That was because Gnombosh seemed to have become uneasy.
"It is only a temporary thing, or rather in the end I have the command." Once again, Lafiel reassured him.

〈Flicaubh slowed down, while coming through the gravity sphere of the planet Akaddo.
There was no longer a danger of being attacked by the enemy.

"Communication, recovered," said Yatesh.

Lafiel looked for the flagship (Glaga) with her spatial-sense. But, it could not be found. The warship had to be outside the range of the spatial-sense.

"Time difference?" she asked.

"10.1 seconds."

We are separated from the flagship, she thought.

"All warships, gather at the flagship (Glaga) position." Atosuryua's voice was heard.

"Direct all hands to stand down. The crew may take rest in turns." Lafiel ordered.
"Arbof, well done."

"Thank you." The gunnery officer's (Trakia) form seemed like the statue of the title of 'fatique difficulty', but there was tension in his voice.

"You can take a rest for 8 hours. I will take over the steering."

"Yes. Well then, I will availing myself of your kind offer." Arbof saluted.

"Everyone else should take a rest, too. But, Yatesh, thou and me will take the first shift."

"It's an honor." Yatesh saluted smiling, but the expression was somehow vacant.

Then, eight hours later, Lafiel left the captain's seat (Sareribash) to Ekuryua and retreated to the Captain's room.
The warships of the 1st Devastation Squadron (Sov Direr Kasna) had formed a column and decelerated while tracing the route of return.
It was a long route and far more calmer than their coming.
Upon entering her room, Lafiel shed off her military uniform (Serlin) impatiently, and immediately fell down on the bed.
And she slept soundly.
But, the sleep was immediately broken. The wrist computer (Kryuno) which was placed beside the bed had sounded off.

Lafiel grabbed the wrist computer (Kryuno). "What is it?"

"Captain (Salerl)" it was Ekuryua. "It's Commander Atosuryua."

"For me?"

"All crewmen. In 10 minutes."

Lafiel interpreted that Commander Atosuryua would make some speech for all army officer (Bosnal) of the squadron in 10 minutes.

"Understood. I will go to the bridge (Gahorl) immediately. Wake up all non-duty crewmen."

"Me?, call a gathering?"

"Not really. Just think of something effectively."

"Understood."

Lafiel donned her military uniform and hurried to the bridge.
While on the way, the alarm claxon (Duniit) sounded off.

Of course, it was Ekuryua's doing.
It was effective, but went too far.
She arrived on the bridge afterward.
Momentarily, she slipped into the captain's seat, and first of all, stopped the alarm claxon (Duniit).

"Attention, this is the Captain (Salerl)" Lafiel said to calm the crewmen. " In a short while, the squadron commander (Lesh Sov) will probably hold a speech for you.
You should be listening. Personnel on duty may take a break.
Personnel who are not on duty, your priority is to have a good rest. Non-duty personnel will wait in that manner.
Captain out."

There was only Ekuryua and Arbof on the bridge, but other flight officer (Lodair) came quickly.

Soon, Atosuryua's form appeared on the main screen.

"To all squadron officers and crewmen. This is the Commander of the 1st Devastation Squadron (Sov Direr Kasna)" Atosuryua's voice flowed.
"I thank everyone for your hard work again. It was a burdensome task, wasn't it? The squadron completed the

mission without a single ship being damaged.
This is as much a miracle as well as a gift for everyone's effort here.
Now, as you all know, at present, the squadron is heading toward planet Menderes. Then, after some recreation, it will receive a new operation mission."

Atosuryua cut off the words here.

"However, there is one news here. A return order was given. A change in plans, the squadron will be heading toward the Kemal Sord.
On the way, 〈Krolcaubh will join up, after receiving replenishment, we will return to the capital (Arosh) Lakfakalle.
Start preparations promptly. It's a good thing, as far as I'm concerned, somehow, I've indeed been away from Lakfakalle for a long time; young people shouldn't be tardy in coming or be secluded or be left behind.
Commander out."

The bridge personnel was required to salute toward the screen.
Atosuryua returned a salute and disappeared.

When the salute was over, Arbof asked. "Are we the only squadron (Sov)?"

"No way." said Yatesh. "The whole half-fleet (Yadobyr) will be relieved. Because it did well."

"Even the half-fleet main force is so far behind!" Arbof turned around.

This was extremely confusing to him.

Although, applying gravitational braking the velocity of the warship shipyard attack forces was still large. It was a velocity which was not possible for allies to catch up.

The four assault squadron (Sov Ashar), which are the main force of the Assault Half-Fleet (Yadobyrl Ashal)〈 Bosuru, have withdrawn from the battlefield, but remained near the front.

Furthermore, there was also the matter of repairs. The 1st Devastation Squadron (Sov Direr Kasna) had not received any damage, but there should be some damaged assault ships.
If the plan was to return the whole Assault Half-Fleet then it will take some time.
It was reasonable for Yatesh to say that at the time. There was just no reason for the devastation squadron to be separated from the half-fleet.
If it were earlier, it would have been thought that a return order was given in order to obtain operation information from the attack ship, but it should already have been accumulated enough.

Lafiel's wrist computer (Kryuno) sounded off.
"It seems what the gunnery officer (Trakia) said was right ." she said.
A more detailed navigation schedule had been sent.
According to that, it seemed that the 1st Devastation Squadron(Sov Direr Kasna) will separate from the Assault Half-Fleet 〈Bosuru and return to the capital (Arosh) alone.
There was no reason to be worried, because the homeward route was secured by the 25th Twin Thorns Fleet(Byr Matolojuta Bolpel). Rather the crewmen of the

other squadrons will envy it.
However, the question remains why would there be a return at this time?
The enemy was not yet driven from this star system.
The Kemal Sord, the planetary group of the Kemal star system, the planet Akaddo, the war production center of the 〈People's Sovereign Stellar Union star system, it was unthinkable they would abandon it. The main force had fled to the outer planets and beyond, apparently it was preparing for a decisive battle.

Actually, at this stage the enemy fighting potential could be ignored since it had decreased with the defeat of the Akaddo arsenal group.
Because of the Abh's preference to be persistent, it had the feeling attached, fleet headquarters seemed to have thought this out thoroughly.
The evidence was that the next mop-up operation was already in planning.
When the operation was over, the 1st Devastation Squadron was to begin preparations for it.
This was rather an urgent return order.
Incidentally, it could have been an escort mission for a

returning supply convoy to the capital, but it was not that.
It seemed they had to return in single-ship space-time bubbles (Flasath), which meant they will be able to return to the capital (Arosh) at maximum speed.

"Gurinshia, can you make preparations for immediate entering into plane-space (Fath)?" asked Lafiel.

"Of course. No damage, no problem." a little hardness was felt in the chief engineer's (Bynkerl) voice as if her pride was hurt.

I should apologize, she thought, because I seemed to have hurt her feelings.

"Is that so?" she answered only.

"So it is, but shouldn't there be some kind of refueling procedure?" asked Gurinshia.

"In 37 hours we are going to refuel at a planet as scheduled. In another 42 hours later we will receive other supplies from a R&R transport ship (Issazec)."

"Understood." Gurinshia was already making supply preparation on the control console.

"Captain (Salerl)" Jinto began. "What will happen to the injured and sick people?"

Aside from the injured and sick people, the 'disabled' were also included in his speech. There was rather an overwhelming number of the same.
It is a fact that in interstellar ship warfare the mind often tends to be hurt.
Even if not, either way the battlefield twists people's mind. For a person from the ground the vacuum is a completely harsh environment.
This is probably abnormal for a person from the ground.
If it were in peacetime, after a rigorous psychological examination, you could afford the option to confine a particularly aggressive person into a room.
Gurinshia talked like a veteran. But, in times of war, there is less room in screening applicants.
Naturally, in the end, the crew member (Sash) will suffer more neurosis.
The condition was light, and did not interfere with normal navigation.
Humans are likely to repeat failures that have not been thought about, and Star Force (Laburéc) had learned

from long experience, because the knowledge is reflected in the design philosophy of the warship.
However, under extreme battle conditions a warship cannot endure the behavior of someone who fell ill from a mental disease.
It was expected in particular that this maneuver was hard to be tolerable by inexperienced crew member.
So, 3 years before serving in a Fleet, a crew member has to undergo psychological testing, and is given discharge if human problems are likely.
Of course, even so, the only place for recreation is the hygienic warship.

If crew member (Sash) are decreased, the survivability of the warship falls, but nonetheless even when the degree of risk was not low, squadron headquarters was to make that determination.

The warship is half-broken if it does half-heartedly when the crew member (Sash) is necessary for the operation, or being almost unscathed to finish the mission.
There was only either one to be blasted to bits. It was one

of the reasons that it was determined
There were the real sick and wounded. But, the seriously sick patients who cannot get up from their beds, and the severely wounded person who must be soaked in tissue regeneration liquid have already been moved back to the hygienic warship at the rear.
Aboard the hygienic warship, which flew in an orbit around Kemal, the sick and wounded people are expected to be healed so far as to be able to participate in future operations.
Leaving the hospital should be nothing else but good news for them.
A recreation planet near the capital (Arosh) is considerably a better place to rest than on a hygienic warship.

"We will receive them back from onboard the hygienic warship 55 hours later." answered Lafiel while looking at the graphs.

"So, Captain (Salerl)," Jinto went on. "would you please , allow me to make preparations to accomodate the sick people right now?"

"Of course." while thinking about a lot and being short-tempered, Lafiel gave her permission.

"Now then." Jinto left the bridge saluting.
She told the crewmen to rest up -- Lafiel herself entrusted Ekuryua again with the duty.

Chapter 9: Mairal's snow (Gyushu Mairal)

Mairal star system—.
It's a 'United Mankind' Frontier star system. Immediately close by is the border of the 'Hania Federation '. Furthermore, the 'Greater Alkont Republic' is near, too. Therefore, it was once a major trade star system. The articles, which had been carried, were accumulated here at the collection and distribution center, and delivered to the 'Hania Federation' and the 'Greater Alkont Republic'. Of course, a large number of ships from the two countries entered port, too.
In order to handle the enormous freight, the 'United Mankind' constructed an artificial planet.
Since the start of the war, the star system has become livelier. Compared to an era of peace it has a burned flavor (Kinakusa) now, but it has increased the volume of goods being handled.
The amount of goods that flowed into the artificial planet , and which cannot be process kept flowing out. It was the center of the main current of goods.
To support the 'United Mankind' with weapons, the ' Greater Alkont Republic' kept passing by the Mairal star system mainly.

When Operation Twin Thorns began, the flow of supplies was reversed.
In order to support the Fleet, which had been cut-off from the center of the 'United Mankind', the supply had to be sent from the 'Greater Alkont Republic'.
However, the traffic of supplies decreased sharply because the 'Greater Alkont Republic' had to support the troops.
Now, even that has ended.

At last, a Star Force (Laburéc) advance force passed through the Mairal Sord (Sord Mairal), and brought the star system under control.
The artificial planet, which was a symbol of prosperity of the Mairal star system, was exposing its paled and miserable form.
It was not the work of the Star Force (Laburéc). It was done by the 'United Mankind' bureaucrat who decided on the destruction of the artificial planet.
This was done so that it could not be used by the enemy, but this was a needless act.
As they did not consider the Star Force (Laburéc) own practice, who never thought of using something made by someone else as their military base in the first place.
Without any artificial planet, the Mairal star system had played its mother-in-law role nicely for the Star Force (

Laburéc) military base.
It could rival the bustling capital (Arosh).
Since its inception, the Mairal star system had never received such a large quantity of interstellar ships.

"What a view, as expected, the 'Gate' (Sord) is crowded ." battleship of the line (Alaicec) 'Kaisof' Captain (Salerl) Bersot said admired.

The 'Kaisof' belongs to the Strike Half-Fleet (Yadobyr Votout) 〈Guderusu. It had been waiting for three days before finally allowed to enter the Mairal Sord.
And, everyone knew a large Fleet had been assembled in the Mairal star system.

"Data concatenation (Lonjhoth Rirrag) completed" Vonyu reported.

"Well done." Bersot has been waiting to ask the questions .
"Thus, do you know now what is going on here?"

"It's the first time the 13th Fleet (Byr Lobina) had gathered here." Vonyu began.
"The 11th, the 12th, and most of all the 14th had gathered

."

"Oh. I thought our Fleet was not the only one, but even the 14th Fleet....." Berso... looked dazed "Is the side/flank all right?"

14th Twin Thorns Fleet (Byr Logona Bolpel) should be prepared for the 'Greater Alkont Republic'.
Knowing that the Fleet had gathered, and exposed a defenseless side, he felt uneasy.

"Well, it does mean we are not worried." Vonyu said to soothe him.
"Fleet headquarters should have some thoughts there."

"Let me do worry." Captain (Salerl) became sulky, and added. "Being attacked without understanding the reason is too unpleasant to accept."

"Well, please worry about appearance as much as you desire. Then, it seems the name of the Fleet will change."

"A change?" Bersot asked surprised. "What name is it?"

"I don't know yet."

"As for me, I am pleased with the name Twin Thorns (Bolpel)."

"Therefore, please enjoy it as Twin Thorns (Bolpel) for a few days before it's too late."

"What?"

"Who knows?" Vonyu turned her head.

"Anyway, a name change also changes the mission itself."

"Perhaps."

"Do you know about the new mission?"

Vonyu worked on (a pad), and silently showed the Captain the display.
There were twinkling 'military unit' letters.
Bersot, immediately, shot a meaningful look at Duhir.

"Hey, it's time for some insights." Bersot said. "What was the Commander in Chief (Glaharerl) talking about, Your Highness the Prince (Feia Larsol)?"

"I cannot say yet." Duhir replied. "I cannot break the military discipline."

"I thought so." he shrugged/hung melancholic. "It is probably not just the military discipline, isn't it?
It is also an obligation as a Royalty (Fasanzoerl) not to say something, isn't it?"

Duhir did not directly answer to that, "I am sorry." he said casually.

"Don't apologize."

"Yes."

"Well, I have some idea."

"Is it the 'Greater Alkont Republic'?" Kazuvu asked.

"That's one possibility."

"There are other possibilities?"

"Probably."

"No way!" Kazuvu is not convinced. "I mean, the Empire (Frybar) had never initiated a war with another country!"

"This is the last war. There is a variety of ways (to wage it)."

"It's still not the last yet."

"If my thoughts are right, then it's mankind's final war."

"Are you seriously thinking that?"

"Oh, yes" Bersot looked at Duhir again. "I will stop here. It is useless to guess this and that in front of a human being(person) who knows the correct answer.

Furthermore, unless he will tell us, we won't know whether or not it is right."

"It pains me in my ~heart/mind." Duhir ~blurbed out carelessly. "I truly mean it."

"I know, I know, Line Wing Officer (Fektodai) Abriel. How about it, want to go in circles talking to ourselves?"

Duhir answered earnestly. "I don't have a go in circles talking habit."

"This is bad for your mental health. At least, how about leaving scribbles about the new Fleet name?"

"I also don't have a scribble habit. Besides, I don't really know anything about the Fleet name."

"But, as a member of the Imperial family (Ruejhe), you must be used to this kind of matters." said Vonyu.

"You get used to what matter?"

"The matter of keeping a secret."

"Something like that, a army officer (Bosnal) has to know about. In any kind of situation, is there someone who would chatter about military units?"

Vonyu shot a suspicious gaze at her superior officer.

"What's with this look?"

"By the way, Captain (Salerl)." Vonyu changed the topic. "We have been given 72 hours of leave."

"Such an important matter should have been told first. Where is it?"

"Everywhere nothing else but mobile city (Laknebh Hoka)." Vonyu said with disgust.

"Boring."

"What were you expecting coming over here? This is a battlefield, you know."

"It is appropriate for a warrior, who goes to mankind's final war, to be entertained. Don't you think so, Line Wing Officer (Fektodai) Abriel?"

"If it's against a warrior headed towards mankind's last war, than that may be so." said Duhir casually.

"Damn it, I put my bet on the jackpot and lost." Bersot looked frustrated.

"It was a jackpot?"

"It was indeed, Your Highness the Prince. Well, as expected from an Abriel."

"Huh" Duhir was confused.

Bersot changed the topic. "However, the mobile city will be crowded anyway."

"Should I make reservations?" asked Vonyu.

"How thoughtful."

"Where do you want to make the reservation?"

"Reserve the best room. If there is a casino nearby the better."

Observing that Vonyu really began to make reservation, Duhir thought, *mixing public and private matters*. He did not like such behavior.

"I got it. The place is called 'Swallow Inn'."[5] Vonyu threw a memory sheet (Jesh).

Bersot received it. "I don't like the name."

"(Fine) then, please do it (the reservation) yourself (then). " said Vonyu in an offended manner. "but it's a minute's walk to the casino."

"Well done, I will bear with the name. By the way, when does the leave/break start?" Bersot asked.
"I wouldn't believe it, but you're not going to tell me that it already started are you?"

"If I were to say so, what would you do, honey?"

"I would cause a rebellion." Bersot replied immediately.

"I won't go/participate along with you."

"I wasn't expecting anything from you." Bersot pated Duhir's shoulder.
"For us there's a prince (Lars)."

"Are you taking a hostage?" Kozuvu hung(/shrugged) his shoulders.

"I don't think it's a very good idea, Captain (Salerl)."

"I don't think so either. I want no part of a trip to hell. As

a leader, I look up to him."

Duhir was shocked.
Would it be possible for the Captain to know the Fleet Commander in Chief (Glaharerl Byral)'s secret order? he thought.
Of course, if he thought calmly, *something like that was impossible.*

"I'm pleased to hear that." said Vonyu. "But unfortunately, the leave begins after we are docked at the city."

"Is that not good enough? What a pity."

"What is (disappointing), I wonder." said the senior communications officer (Alm Drokia) as if singing.

"Oh, well. When do we arrive at the city?"

"22 hours later."

"Is that so. Line Wing Officer (Fektodai) Abriel. Notify the crew about this happy news."

Duhir did as told.

24 hours later, Duhir was in the mobile city.
The name of the mobile city was called 'Dau Sureuk'.
The construction of 'Dau Sureuk' had just begun a week ago, and there were many parts/sections which it did not have yet/unfinished.
Unlike the Captain (Salerl), Duhir did not make a reservation at an inn, and wandered aimlessly through the city.
He verified the location of the 〈Swallow Inn, and walked in a direction leading away from there.

As Bersot predicted, the city was overcrowded with army officer (Bosnal).
Compared to the number of warships the city was probably too small.
When he passed through the bright brand-new street, he appeared in an ancient/antique/very old area.
The mobile city was probably connected with a portion of an automatic canteen/alcohol market that was no longer needed.
Here he found a coffee shop named 'Cat's cradle'[6] and entered.

He ordered hot peach juice (Tyl Nom). He dropped several drops of white liquor into the peach juice.
As he was on leave, the luxury will do him good.
The shop there had been crowded.
But, he did not recognize a single person, he knew, in the customers around him.
However, the people around Duhir probably knew him.
After all he is a Royalty (Fasanzoerl), and the Emperor (Spunej)'s grandson.
However, there wasn't a single army officer who attempted to do a vulgar act such as call out to him.
After a long time, Duhir could feel at ease. However, it did not last long.

"Do you mind (me sitting) here?" a sudden voice asked.

Vonyu had placed her hand on the back(rest) of the seat in front (of him).

"Yes. Of course, please." Duhir gave in and smiled.

"You don't look like you are delighted."

"No, I was just surprised. Doesn't the senior communications officer (Alm Drokia) have any plans?

"Nothing has been planned. Such a sudden leave is not easy to prepare for." Vonyu laughed lightly, and ordered coffee (Surgu).

"It is." Duhir agreed.
He didn't know what he should talk about.
Since she called him, he thought, she may have something to talk about. He decided to wait.
The coffee came.

"Well, for now, you will accompany me for a while."

"Yes." Duhir replied obediently.

"You are so unfriendly."

"Because I am an Abriel."

"Indeed."
Vonyu sipped at her coffee.
Duhir also drunk his peach juice.

"Line Wing Officer (Fektodai)." Vonyu finally started a conversation.

However, I might have illusions, rather than living a pleasant life I think it is a lot of fun as army officer (Bosnal).
But, no matter what, I would like to begin anew, something other than as flight officer (Lodair). I don't have (enough) self-confidence to be able to adapt immediately."

"I see."

"So you see, Line Wing Officer (Fektodai), there's no need to force yourself to blend in."

"Do I appear to overdo it?"

"I don't see it." Vonyu rested her cheeks on her hands. "When one feels like they're floating, a normal human being (person) would try to blend in, or completely turn their back to it, but you just stand there aloof/remain indifferent."

"It is not my intention."

"I understand that. You were just acting normal, right? That's what you call aloofness."

To be seen in such a manner by others, Duhir felt fresh thinking about it.

"And so, what I want to say is, I don't mind if you stay as you are now, but there's just one thing that I want you to remember."

"What does it matter?"

"Don't be contempt."

"Contempt for what?" Duhir looked puzzled.

"Now you belong to this small society/community. The atmosphere on the warship 'Kaisof' is pretty good."
As I have been to many (different) warships, I can tell. Often, it was that I didn't like it.
Therefore, disliking being in the society/community of the warship 'Kaisof' isn't a wrong manner/behavior. But you wouldn't be only contempt."

Duhir stared straight into Vonyu's withering brown pupils/eyes, he answered. "I will try."

"This is not a goal." she said in a harsh tone. "It's an order from a senior officer."

Duhir got more and more confused. If it was, as she said, for the actions on outside behavior then many things are possible.
But, how should he have control over the feelings?
"I will try. That is all I can tell you."

"The Abriel who cannot lie, is it? That's the answer."

"Yes."

"Have you been hating it?"

"No, never." answered Duhir.

"Ah. I'm relieved."

"May I ask a question, please?"

"Please, go ahead."

"Front Flyer (Lekle), do you have any contempt towards the ship at all?"

"You have been thinking, if there is respect or contempt towards the Empire (Frybar), haven't you?"

"No. That is, I don't need to think about it."

"For me the warship and the Empire (Frybar) are the same. However, my true home is the 'Telkes', but that warship does not exist anymore.
Now, all the warships are my home. Yet, I only know the Empire through a warship.
In other words, to disdain the atmosphere of a warship, it is the same to me, as disdaining the Empire."

"I understand."

"After all, making an effort is all you can say?" Vonyu asked, looking as if she was looking at a mischievous child.

"Yes." Duhir nodded.

"I thought so."

Suddenly, a voice came out of the loudspeakers.
"Attention, attention!" a woman's voice hailed. "This is

from Fleet headquarters.
This a temporary message. Please listen now. This message is for the army officer (Bosnal) from the 11th, 12th, 13th, and 14th Fleets from the Twin Thorns Fleets."

Duhir listened carefully. Including Vonyu, the other customers stopped talking, and strained their ears.

"Only now, the name for the operation which we are going to begin has been decided." the woman's voice echoed.
"The operation's name is 'Snow Crystal (Gyknel)'. I repeat. The operation's name is 'Snow Crystal (Gyknel)'. In accordance to Empire (Frybar) procedure/custom, our Fleet will subsequently be renamed to Snow Crystal Fleet (Byr Gyknel).
Fleet Commander in Chief (Glaharerl Byral) will be the former Twin Thorns Fleet Vice Commander in Chief (Roiglaharerl Byrar Bolpel) and 13th Twin Thorns Fleet Commander in Chief (Glaharerl Byrar Lobina Bolpel) Star Force Field Marshal (Spainec Laburar) Kotoponi.
The 13th Twin Thorns Fleetheadquarters will become the headquarters. The contents of the mission, and order of (combat/)battle will be announced later.
These will be from the Snow Crystalfleet headquarters

then."

"Snow Crystal Fleet(Byr Gyknel) or....." Vonyu shook her head. "The Captain (Salerl) is not going to like it."

Chapter 10: Clash in space and time (Go Klima)

"Captain (Salerl), permission for transition through the ' Gate' (Sord) of the Barke Palace (Bei Barkal) has arrived." Yatesh reported.
"Permission time begins at 11:06:32 shipboard time for 38 seconds."

"Understood. Navigator (Rilbiga), determine a good course." Lafiel ordered.

"Course calculation. .....complete." Ekuryua said.

The Barke Sord (Sord Barkal) has been surrounded by a myriad of drifting space-time bubble (Flasath).
It is a group of vessels waiting for the order to enter Lakfakalle.

Of course, there are many space-time bubbles coming from the capital (Arosh), and going away.
The liveliness was an evidence of war. Of course, the great Empire's capital is also lively in peacetime, but Lakfakalle shows its true liveliness when at war.

Along the course calculated by Ekuryua, the attack ship (Sopaïc) 'Flicaubh' kept getting closer to the Barke Sord.

"'Gate' (Sord) ahead, passing in three minutes." Ekuryua reported.
"The countdown will start 30 seconds before."

Eventually the countdown started. "..... Four, three, two, one, passing through the 'Gate' (Sord).
Immediately, the capital (Arosh) was spread out in front (of them).

"Establish data concatenation with squadron flagship (Glaga Sov)." ordered Lafiel.

"Aye. Establishing data concatenation." Yatesh answered. "Data concatenation complete."

"Welcome, 'Flicaubh'." Atosuryua's face appeared on the screen. "You are the last. Although, this is bad, you will receive steering instructions."

Arbof, whose work got taken, hung/shrugged.

The atmosphere on the bridge (Gahorl) was relaxing. It meant they were going to be controlled for a while by

remote from the squadron flagship 'Shutoucaubh'.
In other words, the bridge personnel were not required.

"Attention, this is the Captain (Salerl)" Lafiel broadcasted inside the warship. "All general mobilization activities are suspended. Except being on duty, you are permitted to rest."

The ships from the 1st Devastation Squadron (Sov Direr Kasna) were approaching the capital (Arosh) in column formation.
The destination was special arsenal #7022 (, a factory). Each ship will receive damage reparations there.

"Yatesh, you (are on duty/) have the bridge." verified Lafiel.

"Yes. I will take care of the bridge (Gahorl) for a while."

"We are counting on you." Lafiel stood up from her seat.

"I'm looking forward to the pleasure." Jinto said suddenly.

"Is there something?" Lafiel asked puzzled.

"A banquet."

"Is there such a plan? I haven't heard anything."

"Commander Atosuryua promised, hasn't she? This time, it is Baron Febdash Family (Lyumjhe Febdak) treat to organize a party."

"Oh, that?" Lafiel remembered. She also remembered simultaneously a party organized by Count Hyde's family(Dreujhe Haidar).
As if hearing the noise of a (racoon dog) rising, Lafiel (moved an) eyebrow. "That is exciting thou?"

"Well, I am certainly, but just a little bit ....." Jinto saw Ekuryua's meaningful face who was still in her seat.

"Is there something?" Lafiel looked at Ekuryua's face.

"Interesting." Ekuryua answered absentminded.

"What is?" Lafiel didn't understand yet.

"'Saguri Bari'"[7]

She still didn't understand it.

"No." Jinto explained.
"Just before, Commander Atosuryua, no matter what, seemed to have had official sponsorship of the (first) meeting of the 1st Devastation Squadron (Sov Direr Kasna) for the new members.
Deca-Commander (Lowas) Ekuryua had told (me), and it was even very pleasant."

"Really?" Certainly, 'Saguri Bari' was one of the well-known establishments of the Star Forces.
Lafiel knew, it had a reputation for good food.
"But, there will not necessarily be a banquet."

"Certainly, it's not settled yet." Jinto put a hand to the back of his head. "Right.
It is also good that there is the Baron Febdash Mansion in the Imperial Capital (Garish Arok Lyum Febdak).

"In any case, I am not looking forward to it as much as you do."

"Well, for someone who grew up in the Imperial palace (Ruebei), that may be so, huh?" With a convinced look Jinto continued, "Because banquets aren't at all rare."

"That's not how it is." Lafiel said. "Well, there are frequently banquets, but I can't relax at all because the Imperial family (Fasanzoerl) is the side that does the inviting."

"Then isn't it fine/good to be the one invited?"

"But, I would rather fly the ship than go to a banquet."

"Didn't you just do that to the point of getting tired/sick of it." said Jinto amazed (in disbelief).

"I didn't." denied Lafiel.

"That's right. I didn't." Ekuryua followed suit.

"Yes. Flying with your own hand." Jinto looked at the left hand.
"I don't really know. Is it so much pleasing?"

"There is no pleasure." Lafiel answered. "It is natural for us to fly a ship."

"It makes me happy." Ekuryua said. "I don't know if it's natural."

"Is it like you would feel sick if you don't take a bath?" Jinto asked.

"It's completely different. Generally, it's like when we are about to enter the bath."(Lafiel?)

"I know what you mean ....."

"Isn't it because it's natural to take a bath?" Because you bath in order to stay being clean." (Lafiel?)

"Even so." Jinto ponders. "Isn't it rather momentary? After you got refreshed and are comfortable, you wouldn't need to hide your appearance.
Even when clean I would feel sick enough unless I take a bath once a day. At this point in time, I wonder if I can ever become an Abh."

"What is the problem?" Lafiel looked puzzled. "Didn't you say you went to and finished the Abh preparation school on Delktou?"

"I was trained among other things in that school. If you want to become a citizen (Lef) you cannot miss taking a bath before going to bed, because the Abh have an obsessive compulsion to bath every day."

"Citizen?" Ekuryua seemed to be mysterious.

"As humans from the ground rarely become Abh suddenly, there is no school for that purpose for those people.
Therefore, I went unwillingly to the school for imperial citizen.

"You are a superior officer." Ekuyrua pointed out.

"Excuse me, you are a Deca-Commander (Lowas)." Jinto became levitated.

Indeed, people's thoughts are different. Of course, Lafiel also enjoyed bathing, but feeling good and relaxed is a secondary matter (for her).
Perhabs what Jinto said was most reasonable.
Bathing was necessary to maintain cleanliness, but it was also a time to take pleasure. For the Abh it was more than just a time of pleasure, it was a ceremony that serves to affirm themselves.

"Either way, it has nothing to do with me. I'm just looking forward to the banquet." Jinto said.

"Oh, you can be relieved because I won't permit any singing.
Vice Hecto-Commander (Roibomowas) Abriel. As it stands, take your Kalique (Karik) out, and send your ship's clerk (Wiig) to the Imperial palace (Ruebei)."

"Understood." Lafiel saluted.

Atosuryua was about to return the salute, too, but lowered her hand midway as she started to talk with someone off the screen.
"Vice Hecto-Commander (Roibomowas) Abriel." Atosuryua added. "I don't know why but
this is a recommendation from Chief of Staff (Alm Kasalia). Do not leave ship command (Ponowas) to Deca-Commander (Lowas) Ekuryua.
Though, it is not an order, but keep it in mind."

Lafiel looked at Ekuryua's face. She was expressionless. But it also felt like she was angry at some story.

"I understand." Lafiel replied.

This time Atosuryua returned the salute and disappeared .

"This assignment will fall to the messenger (Kleria)" Lafiel told Ekuryua. "Gnombosh.
Take out the Kalique (Karik) and transport Front Flyer Accountant (Lekle Sazoirl) Lin to the Imperial palace (Ruebei)."

"Yes!"

The Line Wing Officer (Fektodai)'s knees were shaking.
He had probably been tense.
Perhaps it would have been better to entrust someone else.

However, I have already given the order. I may leave scar in his heart if I withdraw it.
It is even possible for a child to fly a Kalique.
Gnombosh will probably regain his composure when he puts on the control glove (Gooheik).

"Well, Jinto. I will see you later." said Lafiel to the ship's clerk (Wiig) before sending him off, while the messenger (Kleria) stood on the other side confirmed.
And she added unintentionally. "(May you) have the Fortunes of War."

Going to the Imperial palace (Ruebei) was not so bad. Gnombosh's steering was certainly hard, but because of that there was no danger,
when the Imperial Palace Control (Blyse Ruebeil) finally guided (the boat) into the pier/dock (Beth).

"Thank you, Line Wing Officer (Fektodai)" Jinto thanked him when he got off the Kalique.

The pier/dock's door opened, and a reception/waiting mobile platform (Yazuria) entered.

An unexpected person was riding in it.

"It's Samson!" Jinto called out his name in disbelieve. " Why are you here?"

Samson was supposed to be in Count Hyde's nation (Dreuhynu Haidar).
Although, he was Jinto's Vassal (Gosuk), the relationship

of the two had not been very different from when they were together aboard the assault ship (Gairh)〈Basroil.

"The Empire (Frybar) is very demanding." Samson began . "I brought a document from the Count Hyde's nation (Dreuhynu Haidar).

Oh, it didn't need to be me, but with some effort I intended to have a look at the face of our lord.
I have taken permission from magistrate (Tosairh)."

"But how.....?"

In addition to Samson, there were two others on the mobile platform (Yazuria). One chamberlain(Beikeburia) was operating it.
Already, a person from a terrestrial planet was visibly a bureaucrat.

"It is our first meeting, Your Honor the Count Hyde (Dreu Haidar)" the terrestrial person greeted politely.
"I am embassy (Geiku Skofarimeil) counselor (Sodoni) Baroth from the prime minister office (Boshifmiash)."

"Nice to meet you, counselor (Sodoni)" Jinto returned the

greeting, and compared Samson's and Baroth's face, to see who will explain it to him.

"We apologize for this impolite measure." Baroth seemed to explain it.
"Normally, your Excellency His Highness the Count (Lonyu Dreur) must be asked for instructions concerning the matter of receiving and reading the document. Regretfully, dispatches take such a long time it seems we are not allowed handling affairs at all. Furthermore, your Excellency is compelled to exchange documents directly with the retainer. For all this I beg your forgiveness.
I took the liberty to negotiate without your consent. I beg for your forgiveness."

"I don't mind, but" Jinto wondered. "Why in such a hurry ?"

"First of, here" Baroth invited Jinto onto the mobile platform (Yazuria).

"Samson." Jinto asked whispering. "What kind of document is it?"

"Everything (about it), including itself, is strictly confidential material. I was kept waiting for a long time. Well, it wasn't such a pain but this way I can sample some liquor which is not available anywhere except in Lakfakalle."

"You were waiting for me?"

"Regardless of how much I put it, you cannot disclose an absolutely confidential document without His Highness the Count's permission?" Baroth asked.

"Therefore, I had made you come expressly."

"Is that so?"

To be frank, he probably prefered it this way. There was also an attachment to the Hyde star system as a home. However, he had no interest in his country/nation being the Count Hyde's nation (Dreuhynu Haidar), too.
It would be enough just to support his own life, and to send goods for him to hold banquets sometimes. He was very interested in Atosuryua's banquet at 'Saguri Bari'. He didn't mind to be called or greeted personally without regard to permission, he muttered in his mind.

However, he was delighted to be able to meet Samson again.
Yes, I will try to bring Samson to the banquet. That person was an old friend of his, so surely Atosuryua will forgo being stingy and won't complain over having one more. He expected Chief of Staff Sobash to rejoice a lot.
"But, for whom must it be disclosed?" Jinto decided to forget about the party for the moment.

"It is for ambassador Tin from the 'Hania Federation'." Baroth answered.

"The Federation ambassador?" he increasingly did not understand.

It couldn't be that he would tell the Count Hyde's nation (Dreuhynu Haidar) to cede. Count Hyde's nation was too far from the Federation.

"Actually, the agreement is a plan for absorbing the ' Hania Federation'. No, this has already started." Baroth said. "Well, it is difficult say, but ....."

"In other words, the Federation star systems chose the same path that the Hyde system did." Samson explained

briefly.

"Wait a minute, please. What's going on.....?" Jinto was surprised.

"The Star Force (Laburéc) has moved to disarm (the Federation), and has already began to occupy Federation territory." Baroth said casually.

"It is still the preparation/preliminary stage. Before starting full-size (operation) it is preferred to refer to the various historic statistics of Count Hyde's nation (Dreuhynu Haidar)."

"Using Count Hyde's nation (Dreuhynu Haidar) as a reference.....?
But the surrendering of all star systems is nothing like the single Count Hyde's nation."

"But, surrendering to the Empire (Frybar), and founding the country/nation (Aith) component in exchange is not uncommon.
Count Hyde's nation (Dreuhynu Haidar) is the most recent case."

"I see." he replied slightly confused.

"In other words, it is about the merging of a large quantity of land world (Nahen) and landed nobility (Voda)?"

"No." Baroth is shook his head. "It is not about the large quantity.
But, it certainly is about several people being born on the land world (Nahen) becoming landed nobility (Voda) but without being an imperial citizen (Rue Lef) before.
The ambassador seems to want to know, if it is possible to know, if a person/family/clan is suitable for management and to become landed nobility."

I have already been thinking of coming back, Jinto thought.
He had to give permission for the information to be disclosed.
If he expressed the intention to offer whatever documents one might want to know about Count Hyde's nation his role would be fulfilled right then and there.
And, Jinto had nothing to hide.

"In some cases, it may be necessary to go to the 'Hania Federation'." Samson said.

"To the Federation?" Jinto was upset. "No, please, wait a minute."

"Do not worry. I won't allow my Lord to face such dangerous situations. When the time comes I will tag along." Samson said hitting his chest.
"If I think about it, I haven't been going around the galaxy/world except to the Empire (Frybar)."

"Me, too." Jinto admitted. "Well, before I came to the Empire (Frybar), my home was another (world)."

"I am also the same." Baroth revealed.

"Well, how about we all go together?" Samson chuckled/laughed.

"No, I'm not allowed to leave." Jinto said hastily. He still wanted to stay aboard the 〈Flicaubh. To be more precise, he wanted to be by Lafiel's side.

Eventually, the mobile platform (Yazuria) entered into an area with a different atmosphere.
Until then, they have been passing through a corridor whose walls had been painted with a grassy plain/

prairie or a forest design, but there was a rich colored and abstract pattern.
This was the space provided for the 'Hania Federation' diplomatic corps(/division).
It is a strange story. Deep within the Empire (Frybar), there was a domain of a foreign country. There were also 'Hania Federation' soldiers guarding it.
But, the flow of information was intercepted. It was not possible for the wrist computer (Kryuno) to be connected to the computer network (Eifu) from here.
It was the reason for which the data had to be carried specifically.
Hidden, far back in the foreign country in the Imperial palace (Ruebei), was the office of ambassador Tin which lies on the other side of a bronze door.
After getting off the mobile platform (Yazuria), Baroth took the lead and guided Jinto and Samson.

"For you to come all the way here, I'm very obliged." the master of the room, the 'Hania Federation' ambassador Tin greeted.

Jinto and Samson greeted meticulously in accordance with formal etiquette.
Jinto sat down on the seat recommended by the ambassador. While listening to Samson explaining

various things/issues on the side, he thought about if he shouldn't go back home again.

At first glance it seemed as if the ambassador was listening very enthusiastically, but that was an outward impression which Jinto received.

"Well, they will serve very well as reference." Samson finished the explanation, for which ambassador Tin showed exaggerated appreciation.

"Which star system will Your Excellency the ambassador, receive/posses?" Jinto asked.

"Me?" Tin showed an odd(/mystifying/hard to catch) smile. "I don't have the intention to become landed nobility (Voda).

I don't think by any.....No, excuse my impoliteness. In any case, I hope to have a house somewhere warm with a nice view, where I can paint pictures and spend the rest of my life."

"Is that so? I certainly ....."

"Did you think I wished to be called Marquis (Loebe) or Count (Dreu)?"

"Yes." Jinto admitted.

"For people who crave the status of landed nobility (Voda) this was the key point of the policy, and in order to persuade them it was necessary they receive this promise from the Empire (Frybar)." said the ambassador. "But, when the time to bestow court rank (Sune) drew near they suddenly grew uneasy and started inquiring about your family's experience.
I had you visiting in this way at the last moment, because an unhappy/unfortunate situation might happen for the Empire if changes happened earlier.
Well, I'm indeed embarrassed to have you here."

"I see."

Tin asserted that it was other people's affairs for him, and let one know about his attitude.

"Now, this is not possibly enough as appreciation for your kindness, I have prepared a small meal as a token of acquaintanceship" the ambassador said.

"If I may, I arranged the best food from my home country before it becomes part of the Empire. I hope you appreciate it as a court rank (Sune)."

Jinto quickly sneaked a look at the time indicator on his wrist computer (Kryuno).
If he went/left now, he would be in time at 'Saguri Bari'.
His heart was moved by the Hania food which was highly praised by many, but it did not compare to the charm of the banquet hosted by the distinguished Baron Febdash (Lyuf Febdak).

"Well, I'm very obliged for your concern, Your Excelleny, the ambassador. (But,) I have to attend to my military duties now." Jinto informed.

"Yes." Tin showed regret on the surface. You are probably very busy. By all means, before you leave the capital (Arosh), I would like to invite you to come."

"Thank you very much for your kindness."

Samson, who didn't know about the banquet, looked dissatisfied. However, he did not intend to challenge/ object his lord in front of others.

He certainly will appreciate it afterwards. The Hania food culture and their food were highly praised, but their liquor had nothing worth mentioning.

Jinto's heart was bouncing by the thought as he made his farewell to the ambassador.
When Baroth and the ambassador finally exchanged their greetings, an alarm went off.

"Is there something?" Jinto asked the ambassador.

"I don't know." the ambassador looked puzzled and looked at Baroth.

"I also don't know." Baroth also seemed perplexed.
"This is not an alarm claxon (Duniit) of the Empire (Frybar). It is probably a warning of this country."

"Certainly,"

The ambassador picket up an impracticable old-fashioned communication device (/telephone), but nobody seemed to be present.

Since the communication facility of the wrist computer (Kryuno) could not be used, the three people from the Empire could only look on.

Eventually, the door opened.
It was a 'Hania Federation' soldier on guard with a menacing look.
Two, three words were exchanged with the ambassador, but Jinto could not understand any words of the conversation.

"What is going on?" Baroth asked.

"I don't understand well, but your country's soldiers....." the ambassador did not finish. There was no need.

It was a ceremonial unit. They are essential for high profile ceremonies, and at the same time, are the elite bodyguards who protect the Emperor (Spunej).

"Excuse me, Your Excellency the ambassador." said the commander politely. "Your Excellency's diplomatic privileges have been suspended.
This division will be closed down, too."

"Could you please tell us, what has happened?" the ambassador asked with a pale face.

"A Fleet of your country has invaded the Kryb Kingdom (Fek Crÿub)." the commander told with a cold voice. "The Fleet is on the way to the capital (Arosh)."

Translator's Notes

1. ↑ “go down” a naval jargon for “stand down” from Earth.
2. ↑ 虫=insect shellfish, shall not be changed or removed, it is explicitly used, it is not a real lifeform as in "hermit crab".
3. ↑ I had a hard time dealing with the chapter title. The title in original can be simply translated as Lakeside. Obviously it had a secondary meaning, a romantic analogy to past time
4. ↑ I don't know the exact designation for a hospital ship in Japanese but there are two types of ships in this category here. Simply translated they are called health- and hygenic-ships. To prevent false assumptions I have decided to leave them as is, but my ideas are: recreational/recovery-, hospital-ships.
5. ↑ 〈=>Swallow Inn = swallow; also means: a young lover of an older woman
6. ↑ 〈=>Cat's cradle"Ayatori"; strange name for a café
7. ↑ 〈=>Saguri Bari"probe needle"; strange name for a restaurant